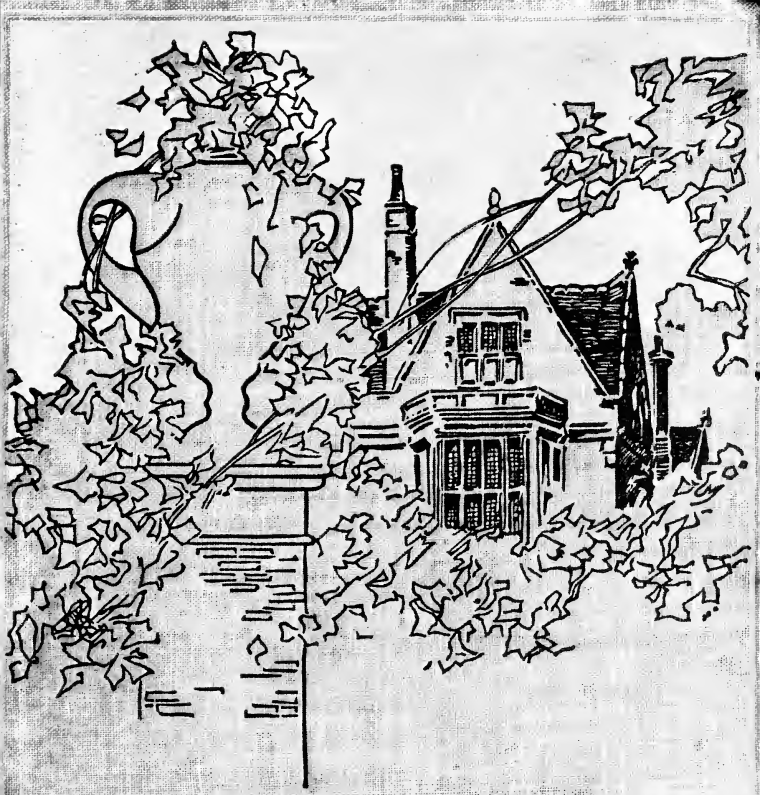

SEVEN GARDENS AND A PALACE

By E·V·B·

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SEVEN GARDENS AND A PALACE

THE SUN-DIAL AT ELLON CASTLE

Arthur Gordon

SEVEN GARDENS AND A PALACE

BY

"E. V. B."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
F. L. B. GRIGGS AND ARTHUR GORDON

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DEDICATED

TO THE CHARMING MEMORY

OF

LADY LOUISA FORTESCUE

BY

"E. V. B."

880784

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The Poetry of Gardens:

A Proem

The Praise of Gardens

A GARDEN!—The word is in itself a picture, and what pictures it reveals! All through the days of childhood the garden is our fairy-ground of sweet enchantment and innocent wonder. From the first dawn of thought, when we learned our simple lessons of Eden and its loss, and seemed to see the thornless garden, watered with clear streams, beautiful with spreading trees, and the train of un-named beasts and birds meekly passing before their spotless lord; and then beyond, far onward to that other garden beloved by the Man of Sorrows, Gethsemane, where we could never picture the blossoming of roses or murmurous hum of summer bees, but only the sombre garden walks, and One kneeling among the olives, and dark, heavy drops upon the grass. And near to this, the garden of the Sepulchre —in a dewy dawnlight, angel-haunted. These were our Gardens of the Soul. In later years

the mists of those older, holier spots wear away as snow-wreaths in the vivid brilliance of the Gardens of Poetry. Then, dreamlike, from sapphire seas arose the Gardens of the Hesperides, and we beheld the white-vestured maidens as they danced around the golden-fruited, dragon-guarded tree. Then bloomed for us the gardens of mediæval Italy. The Poets' garden of cypress and lemon, of marble stairs and sparkling fountains, with all their moonlight mirth and sorrow; ilex-groves of song and silver-threaded laughter; visions of Rimini, or gay Boccaccio's tales. Then did we linger where high-piping nightingales sang to the Persian Rose in the Gulistan of Saādi; felt the pure sunlight shine in a little wilderness of roses, or the green shade that lay round the apple-trees of Andrew Marvell; or in the garden of the Sensitive Plant, we followed the shadowy steps of the Lady, our souls entranced with the love of every flower she loved. They are all beautiful, these Gardens of Poetry! and through the midst of them flows the broad stream of Memory, isled with fair lilied lawns, fringed with willowy forests and whispering reeds. And not less beautiful than these ideal shades are the gardens which live unchanged and

unchanging in many a painted picture within the heart. Real, and not less ideal, is the remembrance of gardens we have seen: seen once, it may be, and never since forgotten.

> *"Un souvenir heureux est peut-être sur terre*
> *Plus vrai que le bonheur."*

So, lovely as truth, crystal-clear as a poet's thought, are the earthly Edens our eyes beheld in the years that are past. How can we forget the gardens of queenly Genoa, in the days ere yet she was discrowned? of Florence, of Rome and Albano and Tivoli? The palm-gardens of Bordighera, where periwinkles—fiori dei morte—rain down their blue from the over-flowing laps of ancient palms, or wander in smiles about the rugged roots; the trellised pergolas and anemoned lawns of Mortola; or those strange island-gardens, Isola Madre of Maggiore, and terraced Isola Bella? Long indeed is the lovely list. Think back into the days that were, and remember them. . . . How they live green and fresh and sweet in the bloom and the glow of their eternal summer! For you, their skies are ever blue, their roses never fade. Winter has never silenced the plash and flow of their fountains, nor chilled

the green from one leaf in their deep groves. The lemon, ripening in pale gold, still hangs ungathered against the southern terrace, where scarlet passion-flowers burn in drifted fire-spots. The peacock, sunning himself upon the stone balustrade, shakes out his emerald glories, while you loiter along the flowery borders of his kingdom; and you know that violets hide somewhere in the grass, for the very sunshine is impregnated with their perfume. Or perchance in fancy you may tread again the narrow pathway that winds around the rocky sea-wall at old Monaco. There, for you, the globes of red geranium reflect still, warm shadows about the names of lovers long since forgot or dead, wrought upon the tablet leaves of aloes or of cactus. There mesembryanthemums shine still, sunned over as of old with rayed discs of red and yellow, while basking lizards at your approach rustle away under the leaves. Lean over the low parapet wall and watch the waves dash in white foam against the jagged rocks below. The old cliff blooms out into cistus and spikes of purple stocks; midway the sea-birds scream and play above the little fishing-boats, tossing like fairy nutshells on the crisp blue summer sea. From the sunny Mediterranean

and that narrow strip of hanging garden, dream on into the black cypress shades of Tuscany.

In all Italy—the land of flowers, the garden of the world—there are no gardens more stately, nor any nobler cypress-trees, than at Villa d'Este of Tivoli. In the spring, by the straight smooth ways under the ilexes and cypresses, all day the golden gloom is made rosy where ever and anon red Judas-trees shower down their bloom. Marble stairs lead up through terraced heights to paved walks under the Palazzo walls. There the air is faint with rich fragrance of the orange-trees. The lofty spires of ancient cypresses reach up above the topmost terrace; far below in the garden, between their dark ranks, sparkle the upspringing fountains. Beyond, above the tall cypresses, rise brown crumbling walls of the old town, piled up with open loggie and arched gates and overshadowing roofs; and high over these, great barren hills crowned with ruined fortresses and shattered keeps. To the west rolls out the ocean of the wide Campagna, undulating far away where Rome is lost in the sunset. Dream on, until you sigh with the wondrous sweetness of Rome herself in the wild wood-garden of the Vatican, where in April days thousands of odorous cyclamen flowers, flush

with crimson all the moss beneath the trees. Dream on, till you see once more the swaying of the tall pines and bathe your steps in tracts of flowery grass in the green Pamphili Doria, and watch the mystic fountain, most like the form of an inconstant spirit, like a pale blue robed Undine uncertain if to leave her source, trembling betwixt desire and fear.

Fain would we linger in the gardens of Portugal, under the sweet-scented camellias of Cintra—lost in reverie amid her rose-wreathed thickets. Strange is the remembrance of the beautiful Montserrat cathedral water-aisles, whose torrents foam down in long cascades beneath the high-arched tree-ferns. And in Spain, like a scene in the "Arabian Nights," comes back to us the old Moorish garden of Granada, with marble-lined canal and lofty arcades of trimmed yew, topped with crescents, pyramids, and crowns.

Those are our gardens of past joy. Yet others still exist, whose memory in secret cherished is shrouded with a tender mystery. Lovelier than all gardens we have known, graced with the far-off charm of the unattainable are they, the gardens we have wished for, but have never seen. Words cannot paint them, for memory

sets no copy: yet the longing for them does still possess our hearts with visions of their unknown beauty. Long ago, there was a garden such as this: a garden I never saw, whose image haunts me with a dim regret. It was in the South of France. The hot, white road brought us at last to the foot of a rocky steep. A shepherd boy pointed to the stony path we had to climb, winding up through thorny ways, amongst the cistus and wild lavender. High on the summit stood the small pink château with its chapel, and the garden walled all round. The chapel door stood wide open and showed within the altar with its faded roses and its tinselled Virgin. But the garden door in the wall was shut and locked. There on the thymy ledge outside the garden wall, beside the worn step of the blind shut door, we sat down among the irises. In the still hush of afternoon we listened to the gentle stir of leaves among the walnuts and evergreen oaks that overtopped the wall. Pale pink petals floated down from the china roses clambering about the trees, and fell softly at our feet. Sometimes there came a little sound of tinkling waters running over into some marble basin; or the fitful melody of a nightingale, or the voice of the turtle was heard somewhere within the thick shade, and the scent

of new-blown orange-flowers ever and again just touched the air. Sometimes a great black wild bee heavily laden passed over from the other side, droned for a moment in the purple irises, and drifted away into space. Below the rock, and away as far as the eye could reach, a grey mist of olive woods filled all the valley, veiling the mountain-sides till lost at last in lilac hollows of the hills. But the garden gate in the wall of Castellar opened never to us; and never save in fancy have we crossed its sunny threshold nor wandered down the close-clipt alleys, or ever seen the sculptured nymphs gleam white amid the ilex-groves—its fountains or the bloom of its summer flowers.

And yet other gardens there are, like none of these. They are no "Adonis Gardens" whose flowers quickly bloom and quickly die. They are not laid out for pastime, nor for our joy in hours of idleness. The flower-beds are narrow, and often the best bloom of them is withered. But the flowers are not for delight; they are all for remembrance. Tears have watered them; Love bound the amaranth in each faded wreath. To most of us it may be that some small spot in the Garden of the Lord is dearer than the finest pleasure-garden; for here we lent to the Heavenly

A Proem

Husbandman the light of our eyes, the flower of our lives. The beautiful feeling that would make into a garden, the place where the dead rest, is well-nigh universal, and finds, perhaps, its best and most natural expression in England. Many a little country churchyard, far and near, even to the remote corners of our land, has its well-kept borders, and is weekly drest and bright with fresh flowers. And this is as it should be. For Pride or any other reason, the costliest monument is raised; but only Love will plant roses about the tomb, or weave for it the crown of lilies: it is Love only that will lay some poor flower upon the little green mound. The Poor have no need of carven headstones; they know well the graves of their dead, and thither will they bring in all simplicity their best and gayest from the cottage plot, so that on a summer Sunday the churchyard is like a garden. It is more than a garden! it is "Mazar"—as in the Arabic phrase for the grave—"the place of resort."

And how sweet is such a garden, should you find it in the wood! It was June in the New Forest. We had wandered out of the sandy forest track into a green labyrinth of nutty ways. Beyond, the beech-wood stretched in heavy masses. Hidden deep in the hazel underwood, a thrush

sang as they sing only when summer is young. We too were young, and we sang all together. On a sudden sounded, quite close at hand, the harsh notes of a band of music. The village musicians had found us out; and they came, and with "fiddle, fife, and drum" broke up the quiet of our cool retreat. Hush! suddenly penetrating through and above the jangling tunes, rose the deep tones of a funeral bell. Again and again at solemn intervals the bell intoned through all the light discordance, while the thrush amidst the hazels unheeding still sang on. The knell, wherever it might be, sounded clear and strong through depths of woodland leaves. We thought of Hans Andersen's tale of the bell that pierced the night among the trees, and none knew from whence, and none ever found its secret, but the king's son and the peasant lad. Unlike the story, we had not far to seek. Soon was found a little churchling in a clearing of the wood. The bell had ceased. In the garden the mourners were departing from a fresh-made grave. Lines of bright limnanthus and nemophila on either side the path gave back the sunshine. At the open door stood the white-haired sexton with his keys. Entering in out of the golden sunshine the church seemed to be a space of darkness where the win-

dows glowed in colours richly bright, like gardens of the blest in the land that is afar off.

Endless and full in far-reaching sweetness is the Praise of Gardens. From the days of classic Greece and Rome down into modern times, the theme bears onward. But is the praise now sincere? Who is there now to whom the ordering of the ground about their homes is as a "princely diversion"? Who in our day will care to annex to their palace-houses gardens such as world-famed Chatsworth or Moor Park, Blenheim, Trentham, Chiswick, Nonsuch or Hampton Court? Where now shall we find a new Albury such as Evelyn planned, or another Dropmore? Or across the Channel, who is there now to imagine the grandeur of a new Garden of Versailles, of Fontainebleau or Chantilly, or those which surround the Pallavicini Villa in Italy? The world is narrowing. Every one in these days must have a garden of some sort; but few have time to live much in it, and a first-sight glare of colour from the windows suffices for the many. And herein perhaps the secret lies. The natural thirst of the eye for colour has to be satisfied, and much knowledge—and time, which is more scarce—are required for the best manner of giving it.

And since its reaction after the almost forgotten craze for aniline, pure colour is denied in our houses, the garden is called upon to fill the void. Even cottagers' gardens—and their beauty has time out of mind been the peculiar feature of our English roadside scenery—are losing fast their character of homely gaiety and interest, with the innovation of "colour" in scarlet and yellow bedding-out plants, to the neglect of the pinks and gillyflowers and honeysuckles, beloved of our forefathers. The garden-like charm of the London parks, made up of brilliant flower beds backed by avenues of trees, is pre-eminently the charm of colour, which was surely never more sorely needed or more splendidly supplied; while the quiet onward step of taste and culture is marked by the sowing of crocuses in the grass. The simple magic of colour for its own sake can never be displaced, yet a garden in the highest sense means more than this. There are those who know and love each plant that grows in it; some by whom "lessons sweet of spring returning" are learned new every year amongst their daffodils and snowdrops; to whom summer and winter and "brown autumn's store" bring hopes and pleasures in their "garden of delightsome smells," undreamt of by the many who

judge only of the red and blue and yellow stretch of flowers in dreary repetition, year after year; and who believe the well-mown lawns to mean only space for outdoor games. And the joy of a garden never stales. It may be the tiniest plot that we possess, or it may cover acres of royal extent. No matter whether large or small, it will feed that inner light which is rarely absent from the obscurest life, and which in the greatest shines forth as the creative power of poetry. Thus in Persia we read that "the humblest peasant's cottage has a patch in its court reserved as a flower-garden; a little gleam of Nature's poetry amid the arid waste and prose of life, as poverty and oppression render it to him." And more than this, there grows up a kind of sympathy between the garden and its master. Trees and flowers seem to rejoice in responding vigorously to the care and love bestowed upon them, while the master himself rejoices in their growth and well-being. An old writer (R. Austin in "The Garden of Fruit Trees") of the seventeenth century says, "As the husbandman takes pleasure in his fruit-trees so they (in a sense) take pleasure in him. He delights to walke among them and converse with them by meditation, searching out their natures,

and virtues; he takes pleasure in their shade in heate of summer, and in their wholesome fruits in their seasons; and the fruit-trees also may be said to take pleasure in the husbandman's watering and dressing; discovered by their increase, strong and vigorous shootes, pleasant Blossoms, and multitudes of fruits from yeare to yeare."

Fashions change in gardens as in all else. From the days of pleached alleys and bower walks, quincuncial paths and all manner of fantastic topiarian devices, to serpentine walks, and little flower-beds set out all over the lawns, and the unmeaning monstrosities of cast-iron seats and vases as designed for the plates in "Paxton's Magazine," is a very wide interval. Summer-houses, once so important to every well-devised garden, are no longer in vogue. The word "Arbour" is almost out of print. Very dreary to us, seem the arbours and summer-houses, for which in those times they spared no expense. We like best now to sit upon the grass under a tree. Happily the more fantastic imaginings of ruins and temples, and "Anglo-Chinois Gardens," whatever they may have been, are out of fashion finally and for ever We spend less pains and trouble on our garaens, and yet, in a way, there is more to be done. The costly

orangery of other days remains for the most part empty, or put to another use; but we make our cuttings, which involves an immense outlay of time and labour. The phase of dull and paltry gardening is outlived, as is, almost, that of carpet bedding—and good taste is coming round again. The formality of the old style, tempered with a love of trees and plants in Nature's own undress, must always be the best. And with the perfecting of all arts of gardening learned during these past hundred years, we ought to find no difficulty in the laying out of finer and more beautiful gardens than the world has ever seen. Yet it is hardly so. We have flowers and fruits in far greater variety, but the very best plan for a modern garden will still be that which most nearly embodies the idea of some delicious pleasaunce of old time (such as that one at Kenilworth described in Laneham's pages), or follows the design of some old French or Dutch masters in the art of "jardinage" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The gardens made by these famous architects (for such they appear to have been)—Le Rouge, Le Nôtre, Le Pautre, Le Blond, Le Bouteaux—Monsieur Barbier, "jardinier célèbre," or Antoine Richard of Le petit Trianon, "jardinier de la Reine"—or those

among them that remain, verging as they are to decay: with hedges thin and drawn up, neglected wildernesses and fountains out of order, still retain an indescribable charm. Old engravings of the designs for them, with their "parterres de broiderie," "parterres d'eau," "Boulingrins," and "pavillons de verdure," are full of graceful curves, like beautiful patterns for needlework. Modern designers can do nothing better in this line.

Still less, on the other hand, can we believe it possible that Le Nôtre himself could conceive the idea of a garden as given in the letter I copy here:—"Nothing can be more absolutely unscientific than my ways, according to the usual sense of the word. I wish to gain a knowledge of all garden flowers, but only to see which can be used in a picturesque and beautiful way, and which had better be rejected and left alone. In gardening I try to paint living pictures with living flowers, paying attention to throwing them into groups both for form and colour, and so on. I am perpetually at amicable war with the gardener for over-trimmers. His grand idea is that edges must be trimmed, and all walks brushed every Saturday, while I hold the heresy of not minding a little moss on the paths, and of

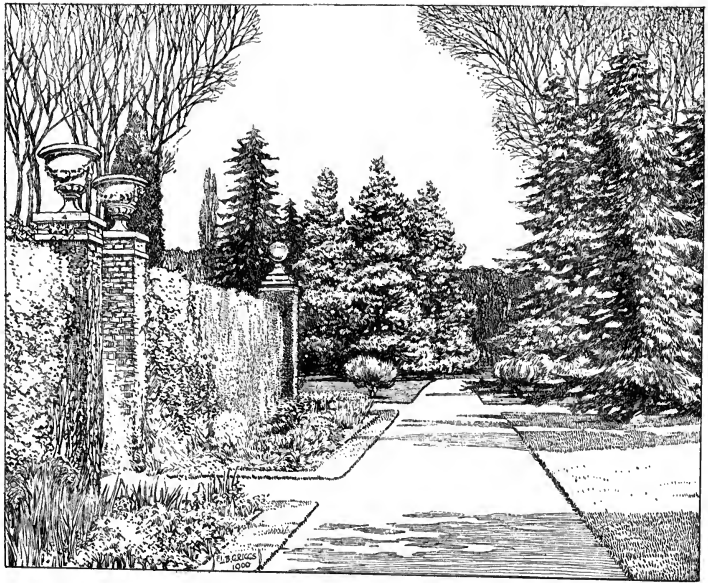
rather preferring a few scattered cluster rose-petals lying on its brown-green velvet. I wish I could show you some of my garden pictures that seem fairly successful:—The Primrose Garden, lately replanted and improved as to its lines of its boundaries. I grow mostly the large yellow and white bunch primroses; and the Primrose Garden in its season is a river of gold and silver flowering through a copse of silver-stemmed young birch-trees for a hundred yards or more. Another of this year's pictures that pleased me, was a large isolated group of white foxgloves with bracken about their base, backed by a dusky wood of Scotch firs."[1]

In the praise of gardens which is to be found scattered through the writings of many prose authors of all ages, the most careless reader cannot fail to observe a curious contrast between the older "praise" and that of more recent date. The difference, which is hard to define, lies not so much in style or in the turn of expressions; these would be but the natural outcome of different literary periods. It lies in the mind and sentiments of the writers on the subject. The thoughts of men who loved gardens in bygone ages, were coloured no doubt by the kinds of flowers commonly

[1] *Miss Jekyll.*

cultivated by them, and the rarity of many as compared with the rich increase and variety we now possess. Still, besides this, there is an unconscious poetry, a keenness of observation and sensation, and a sort of abandonment to pure enjoyment of trees and flowers and clear waters, in those earlier writings, which to us is unknown. There are quaintly minute descriptions of gardens in the times of Gawain Douglas (1400–1500) *which have all the fresh flavour of poetry, and all the enduring fascination of a picture by Quintin Matsys. Even so late as last century, Addison paints the stately gardens he loved, as well as the simple delights of old-fashioned flowers, with a completeness of most finished detail. A choice style, for which modern life finds little time, and which is scarcely found in the best garden literature of to-day.*

Huntercombe, 1885.



HUNTERCOMBE

The Stateliness of Gardens:

Dropmore

South Bucks

A Boy's Dream Fulfilled

HIGH above the Thames, between the villages of Burnham and Wooburn, in South Buckinghamshire, on a beautifully wooded plateau, stands one of the historic homes of England. Dating back from little over a hundred years, it yet cannot be said to yield in varied interest to many an abode of far greater age.

On a bright June day in the latter half of last century, the sun streamed down upon a wild upland moor on a spur of the Chilterns; One Tree Hill, they called it. The brown heath was just beginning faintly to flush with pink the hillside slope, and in the still, sun-warmed air few sounds save the singing of larks disturbed the silence.

It was a half-holiday at Eton College, seven miles away in the valley by the river. Youth makes nothing of a few miles more or less, and an Eton boy of

fourteen, who had run over to spend a long hour at his favourite haunt, threw himself down in the heather and dreamed once more his wonted dream. The view from the schoolboy's chosen point is as fine now as it was in those long-ago days. In the middle distance Windsor Castle rises like a vision from the midst of a great tract of forest land—for as a forest the hedge-row trees and wood appear. With the aid of a glass one can distinguish the sentry's red coat on the North Terrace above the smoke and old red roofs of Windsor town; while in clear weather the flag on the Round Tower is distinctly visible. Seas of blue distance above the Castle's highest towers roll on into the far horizon beyond Hindhead and Blackdown and the Surrey Hills. Little wonder that an imaginative boy should feel the spell while his eye received the aerial beauty of the scene. Here, then, when he grew to be a man, he would build a house; here he would live, and his boyhood's dreams should be a reality.

In due time the Eton boy, after a brilliant course at school and at Oxford, became Lord Grenville, and made a name for himself in English history

as a statesman, and "an excellent scholar."

In 1792 Lord Grenville, then Foreign Secretary in Mr. Pitt's Government, made purchase of a small house and thirty acres of land—Dropmore Lodge, on One Tree Hill. In the following year he married his kinswoman, Anne Pitt, only daughter of Thomas, first Lord Camelford, a nephew of the great Earl of Chatham. The planting of trees in immense quantities was at once begun, for in those early days the one idea seems to have been "to plant out the common." Nothing now remains of this old common on the garden side of the house, excepting to the south, where the lawn skirts the edges of a few remaining acres of rough, heathy land, crossed here and there by smooth green drives. The bit of wild moorland has almost lost its older character; the grassy ways are partly hedged in with brake-fern, and in June it is like a little wilderness that blossoms as the rose. For all among the purpling cushions of bell-heather and ling are scattered flowering sweet-briers in perfumed luxuriance, enwreathed with a myriad little roses of every varied shade of pink. I know nothing more lovely of its kind than these

sweet-briers in the season of their bloom. Lady Grenville (of whom later on there will be much to say) had a passion for them, and planted them about in the grass. And now they come all wild, of their own sweet will wheresoever the spirit moves them, and there is none to say them nay. And this is well; for is it not true that Art, even of the best and finest, comes never near to Nature when in her decorative mood? It is characteristic of the whole of Dropmore, now in the years of its full perfection, how, making it seem yet more beautiful, wild Nature lives side by side with the trim stateliness of the place. A hundred years have brought to a goodly stature and growth the young saplings planted by Lord Grenville. Each plantation thrived as plantations never thrived before; and seldom in other places can be found more luxuriant groves of beech and ash and oak, with choice conifers in great variety brought from many a distant land. In October 1792 a present of 2000 beech were sent in a cart from Stowe. Evidently beech was then the favourite tree for Dropmore, as Lord Buckingham writes, "You positively forbid the whole tribe of firs. . . . But I take it for granted that you do not proscribe

them in your plantation, because in the very shallow soil of your hill the Scot fir-larch and stone-pine will be your best friends, and will nurse the birch and beech to which you must trust."

Among the family papers occurs a letter of December 12, 1791, in which Lord Grenville writes to his cousin, Anne Pitt, then at Rome :—

"I am in treaty for a small house near Taplow; but it is so mere a cottage that if I make the purchase I must add something to the house immediately, and this discourages me a little, from the fear I have of entering into bricks and mortar." In January 1792 he writes again: "I have completed the purchase of the cottage . . . and I am going down to take possession of it in a few days. It is so literally a cottage (having originally been inhabited by a labourer, as such) that I must make some small addition to it in order to make it at all inhabitable; and even then the house will be a very bad one. I think you will be pleased with the situation when you see it, though I know Lord Camelford will think it a great deal too exposed. I do not think that a great objection, being compensated, as it is, by the advantages of air and

prospect." And on 26th February: "I am more and more delighted with my purchase in Bucks, and have already begun upon the small addition I am making to the cottage. I shall be much disappointed if you are not pleased with the spot, though perhaps it would be more prudent in me not to puff it to you too much. My builder does not seem to comprehend why I am so very anxious that the additional rooms should be habitable in the course of a few months. Can you help him to guess?" That "the small addition" should end in several large and finely proportioned rooms—one of them, "the gallery," sixty feet in length—was not surprising. Lord Grenville's expressed distrust of "bricks and mortar," although thus amply justified, proved on this occasion no subject for after regret. Year after year "the cottage" became filled with collections of all kinds, gathered together from Italy and elsewhere by the owner's admirable taste and knowledge in things of worth and beauty, as well as by bequests to Lady Grenville from her parents and other relatives. Rare and valuable books lined the library and filled the shelves in the gallery. Much of the Sèvres and other

china stored in cabinets or ornamenting the rooms is in these days well-nigh priceless. Very precious also are the many historical relics here preserved. Foremost among them are the Grenville Manuscripts. They were discovered at Dropmore by the Hon. G. M. Fortescue in 1868, and part of them have been printed and published by the Historical MSS. Commission. They consist chiefly of State papers full of the deepest and most varied political interest of the time. They include important communications between King George the Third and Lord Grenville, and the other great Ministers of State. Here and there in letters from more intimate friends occur touches of private or local interest. Such, for instance, is the side-glance Lord Mornington (October 1792) gives of his friend: "I cannot tell you with how much pleasure I saw your *ménage*. I told Pitt that matrimony had made three very important changes in you, which could not but affect your old friends—(1) a brown lapelled coat instead of the eternal blue single-breasted; (2) strings in your shoes; (3) very good perfume in your hair powder. All the rest remained the same, particularly quiz drawing, which Lady Grenville seemed

to be studying with great application." Pictures, many of them original works of old masters, began to cover the walls. Landscapes by Claude and Salvator Rosa (bequeathed to Lord Camelford by his maternal uncle, Sir Richard Lyttleton); a portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria, by Vandyke; family portraits by Gainsborough, Sir Joshua, and Hoppner; a lovely Romney over the dining-room chimney-piece portrays Hester, Countess Fortescue, and Catherine, wife of the Honourable Richard Neville, daughters of the Right Honourable George Grenville. A fine three-quarters length portrait of William Pitt, by Hoppner, is in the west library, and Lord Grenville's intimate friend, the Marquis Wellesley, is in the anteroom. In the hall are ranged marble portrait busts; amongst them the Duke of Buckingham, William, first Earl of Chatham, the Right Honourable William Pitt, Thomas, first Lord Camelford, H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, &c. There is also an antique—a head of Jove—and two large and exceedingly fine Italian vases, adorned with amorini in alto-relievo illustrating the seasons. The treasures of Art which fill the house are far too many to enumerate, while the

decoration of some of the rooms is unique. In the upper corridor a large room known as "the Print Room" deserves mention as a specimen of a style of decoration now obsolete. Pasted upon the blue wall-paper are a quantity of engravings, some being of great value. The variety of these engravings is endless, and they are done in every style—in mezzotint, copper, steel, and wood. Every kind of subject is represented—cathedrals and forest scenes, compositions from ancient masters, figures, and picturesque heads nearly life-size. Every print is surrounded in a grey paper margin like a frame, and all are connected by graceful designs in grey of festoons and wreaths. Not quite least in interest among portraits of Lord Grenville's many friends, there hangs over the chimney-piece in a room off the library one, life-size, which represents his favourite Italian greyhound, "Aline," painted in five different attitudes of grace. Some other dogs were also counted by him as dear and faithful friends. On the bookshelves may be found a thin volume, *The Nugæ*, in which are printed lines to "Zephyr" and "Tippo," commemorating their master's affection for them. There is a touch of pathos in the supposing dying address (in

Latin) from one of them—the old greyhound—translated thus—

"Dear Master, thy poor Zephyr, old and blind,
Gratefully thanks thy love, which ever kind
And still unchanged, e'en yet has power to charm,
And death's approach of bitterness disarm.

. . . . . .

Alone survives, not lightly praised by thee,
Thy dying servant's fond fidelity."

Tippo's story, recorded in verse, appears in the Latin epitaph, carved on the stone under which he lies, overshadowed by many trees, near the garden fountain. It seems that the dog was washed ashore from a wreck in a disastrous storm off the coast of Tenby. He carried a pocket-book held firmly between his teeth. The dumb, devoted creature could give no account of himself; but it was believed that he alone was saved, bearing safely to shore his drowned master's trust when the ill-fated ship and all her crew went down. The dog never left the spot where he came first to shore, and there Lord Grenville found him when he visited Tenby playing with the children on the sands. No one treated Tippo unkindly, but he was no one's dog; so he was brought away to Dropmore, where he ended his days in peace.

With the newly-planned additions in brick and mortar a garden also was speedily begun; paths were laid out, and the road turned by Act of Parliament. In 1804, by the tragic death of Lady Grenville's only brother, Thomas, Lord Camelford (he was killed in the field behind Holland House in a duel with Captain Best), she succeeded to Boconnoc and the large Cornish estates.

Boconnoc was in those days far too remote to be the abode of a busy statesman. Their increased means enabled Lord and Lady Grenville to lay out more on Dropmore, Lord Grenville eagerly buying up whatever land round about came into the market. One part, near the Lodge entrance to the Queen's drive (so called from Mr. Fortescue having in 1867 cut the road through the wood for Her Majesty's convenience when Cliveden was lent to her by the Duchess of Sutherland), and acquired from Lord Orkney, is still known as the "Malplaquet Ground." It will be remembered that Lord Orkney's ancestor's peerage was bestowed in recognition of his services at the battle of Malplaquet; and some elm trees still stand there, planted according to the order of battle. Among other purchases we find

the Manor of East Burnham, including the beautiful woodland known as Burnham Beeches.[1] Also Huntercombe Manor was amongst the lands annexed to the Dropmore estate (sold again in 1812 after its fine old gates had been carried off for the terrace there), and also Hitcham Park, now Mr. G. Hanbury's property. The garden walls remain, but the old house—which, according to local tradition, had been inhabited by Judge Jeffreys—was pulled down. Thus the lands of "One Tree Hill" grew into an important estate, while the garden and the famous Pinetum became what they now are, the pride and the glory of that part of South Bucks.

The cottage, transformed into a spacious abode, constantly received royal visitors, George the Third and Queen Charlotte, with the princes, often arriving from Windsor to early breakfast, after sending an equerry with but half-an-hour's notice. Interesting scraps connected with such events are still recollected in the family—as, for instance, the morning when Lord Wellesley in his dressing-gown, strolling casually into the gallery to look for a book before breakfast, found to his consternation

[1] Now belonging to the City of London.

the royalties all assembled there. Or, the agony of mind suffered by Lady Grenville when the little Italian greyhound, whom she had left shut up in her dressing-room, rushed in and jumped up on Her Majesty.

The poet Samuel Rogers was a frequent visitor. He gave the large stone vases or pots (in fact, they are made of iron) placed along one of the garden balustrades. The poet delighted in playing with the children of the house, who—although now no longer children—have not forgotten how he was accustomed to promise them "a white pony." The white pony, however, never came to hand. The visitors' book contains many names of note—people who have stayed at Dropmore. Among celebrities of later date, Lords Stratford de Redcliffe, Beaconsfield, and Grey met there in 1870. Lord Stratford left the following lines in commemoration of his visit:—

"Once a bleak common with a single tree,
Dropmore is now the lovely spot you see.
Years have done much; refinement, genius, more;
These have matured the beauties shaped before.
Groves that to every clime their birth may trace
A maze of flowers, where flowers become the place.
Arch, temple, terrace, grotto, fount, and bower,
Walks for each season, shades for every hour.
Nature's wild growth, with chast'ning art combined,
Enchain the sense and calm the restless mind.

Here may we rove at will with thoughts as free
As the light breeze that flits along the lea;
Or, pausing from beneath some leafy spray,
Stretched on the slope with tender gaze survey
Where earth and sky in airy distance meet,
Windsor's proud towers, or Learning's holy seat.
Fair haunts! which life of half its ills disarm,
Where still the lingering Muses breathe a charm,
Farewell! For peace among your bowers awhile,
Snatched from a world, whose cares, whose joys
defile,
These lines of little worth, but from the heart—
Well pleased I leave; yet sad we now must part."

(Signed) STR. DE R.

October 6th, 1870.

Princess Louise, with Lord Lorne, has visited the gardens and Pinetum, and Queen Victoria on one occasion drove over from Windsor and had tea at the Chinese Seat, close to the long range of aviaries, filled with singing canaries and ornamented with green and blue plaques of porcelain, brought hither from China in former years.

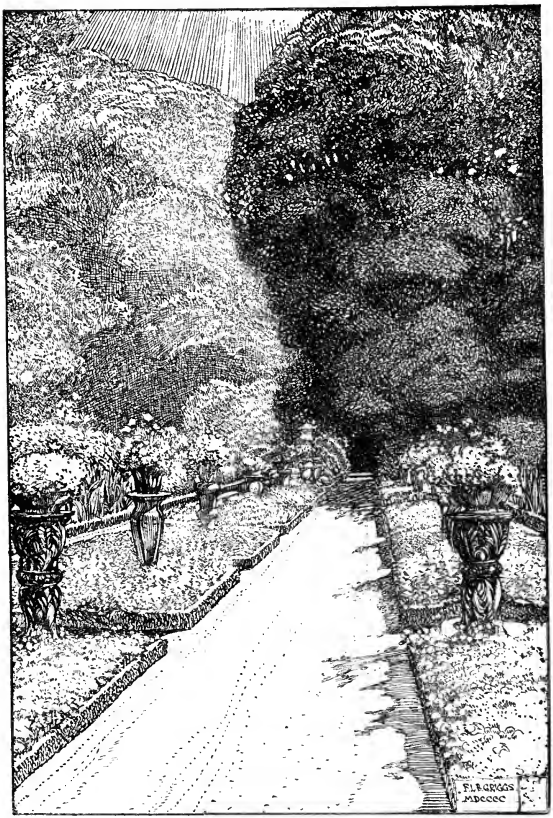
Long before these visits, in January 1834, Lord Grenville's earthly life had closed. He had been an invalid, paralysed and unable to walk for some years before his death. Yet, though shrinking from the sight of strangers, he always allowed the public to visit the gardens, &c., a privilege continued up to this day. The generous kindliness which was known

to give its tone to his whole character may be said still to breathe in the air of the Dropmore he created; and now—more than sixty years after his death—the charm endures.

The Pinetum had been planted in 1830, and Lord Grenville had taken the liveliest interest in the growth of the young trees. Lady Grenville went on with the work, planting and beautifying the place, while she personally superintended everything; and not a stick might be touched without her supervision. She lived in her garden; in her later years going about it in a bath-chair, or, in bad weather, a miniature chariot known as "the Box," drawn by her little grey pony, Polly. The few living who can still remember her, recall her appearance as the very picture of an old lady of the olden time; wearing always a long trailing gown of rich silk, black or grey, soft India muslin and beautiful lace, and a close-fitting cap. A relic of her wardrobe is to this day kept in a chest at Dropmore—a huge Dunstable garden-bonnet of the shape formerly described as "coal-scuttle"; useful, indeed, though hardly so becoming as the lace cap!

When in London, Lady Grenville delighted in visiting the Horticultural and

Botanical Gardens. One day in 1863, the Duke of Buccleuch, President of the Society, presented her to the youthful Princess of Wales. Miss Fortescue relates that—"On my aunt mentioning the occurrence to my father, he remarked: 'The Princess ought to be told that the lady who was to-day presented to her had been presented to Marie Antoinette.' 'No,' she quickly interposed, 'not *presented;* the Court was then in mourning for the first Dauphin.'" Grande Dame in her way, and wont to inspire with awe the souls of others besides her young great-nieces, Lady Grenville was certainly one of the most remarkable characters of her day. She was possessed of great decision and great taste, with an intelligent and enthusiastic love for flowers and trees. To this she added a curious originality of invention and sense of constructiveness. Her example gave an impulse to the delightful interest of gardening in England. It might also have encouraged the practice of the best style of gardening had not the new system of bedding out—here first exemplified—begun to lay hold on the public taste. The extremes to which this system was everywhere carried seem now to have brought about reaction in a timely return



DROPMORE

to a happier and more lovely taste in gardens. Most of her work exists unaltered, just as she left it, in the place she loved so devotedly. And this work attests that, as there is nothing fantastic or ephemeral in the style which her faultless judgment adopted, neither is there anything niggardly, petty, or narrow in the suggestion of her garden lines. The ornamentation in antique marbles, statues, fountains, and vases, is noble enough to grace a palace garden in the Italy of other days. The lapse of years—as is inevitable through the growing up of shrubberies and surrounding plantations—changed much of the entire aspect of the garden. Yet the changes now tell as simply carrying out the finished plan according as it was originally conceived from the first. The most scrupulously purist taste of the present day would scarcely suggest the alteration of a single line; and so long as "improvements" are not attempted on a large scale, Dropmore will remain a monument of garden art, such as there are but few in the country.

Lady Grenville's constructive genius sometimes manifested itself in rather questionable ways, although the effect, it must be admitted, is picturesque. For instance,

she did not hesitate to pull to pieces old oak cabinets, &c., and putting together the carved pieces with old oaken blocks from which calicoes had been printed, made up with them altogether the whole outside architecture of a lodge. In her gardening, however, she was unrivalled. Could she but have beheld her garden as we saw it the other day in the full glory of midsummer-tide, how would she not have rejoiced in it! In one part, a cloud of turquoise-blue delphinium arose in radiant contrast against the blackness of a cedar background—the symphony of colour resumed beyond in quiet interludes of sky between the tree's dark boughs. In Lady Grenville's time, however, "delphinium" was only "larkspur," and had not reached one-half the size it measures nowadays. The huge tree of lemon-scented magnolia (*Magnolia conspicua*) which spreads its perfume on the chilly airs of January, is probably old enough for her to have enjoyed its bloom for many seasons. Another sweet-scented shrub, planted close beside the lake for the refreshment of the passer-by, is a well-grown clove-tree (Calycanthus) of most unusual size. This delicious shrub, however, was planted since her day. Lady Grenville preserved her

faculties and her vigorous intellect to the end. She died in June 1864, leaving Dropmore and all her property to her nephew, the Honourable George Mathew Fortescue. This seems the place for some mention of the old gardener, Philip Frost, once so widely known in the horticultural world. He survived his mistress for twenty-three years, and died in 1887, having served the family for more than half a century. It was he who put into the ground, and carefully watched over, most of the Pinetum trees and others now flourishing in the green vigour of their age, and likely to outlive for many a decade the hand that planted them. To the old gardener each tree became an object almost of adoration, dear to him as his own child. Still fresh in the recollection of some may be the oft-told tales he never wearied of, and which beguiled his rounds with visitors to the Pinetum, picturing with renewed zest each time they were related his many encounters with Lady Grenville (in which he invariably scored!) whether these concerned the treatment of the champion Douglas fir or of some lowlier evergreen.

The Pinetum is a favourite and beautiful spot. It is a lawn of the smoothest, softest turf, shaded, and not over-shaded,

by several grand specimen trees. Monarch of them all is the great *Abies Douglasii*. Lord Grenville planted it a little seedling in 1827; it covers now an area of sixty-four feet—towering up 120 feet. The tree measured four feet higher, until a tempest broke the leading shoot. Often since has it suffered in "winter rages," or by heavy weight of snow. Undismayed by reverses, more and stronger shoots have been sent forth; to-day, with its thousand branches feathering to the ground, the great tree stands recognised—the finest Douglas fir in the land. *Abies Brunoniana*, *Abies Pindro*, and *Abies Grandis* are fine specimens. Almost the most beautiful tree of all the plantation is a *Cedrus Atlanticus* (or *C. Libani Argentea*) of great size; it is nothing more nor less than silvery plumes in azure mist. *Pinus Lambertiana*, the famous sugar-pine, has produced its long cones more than twelve inches in length. No. 114 is *Cedrus Deodara*, grafted on a Cedar of Lebanon, a well-grown, graceful tree nearly seventy feet high. No. 195 is *Cedrus Deodara*—the first tree planted by Frost. *Pinus Insignis* is splendid, with its rugged rough red bark and noble unsymmetric growth. This tree, when only an inch high, was a present from

Mr. Munro, chief gardener at Chiswick, and was carried home by Frost in his waistcoat pocket. Another Insignis is No. 58, on the edge of a glade called Miller's Field. It seems quite full-grown, judging from those in the famous garden at Monterey in California, whence, with *Cupressus Macrocarpa*, it has spread all over the world wherever the Anglo-Saxon has wandered.

At the farther end of a narrowing glade, towards the lake, perhaps the best-known tree here, a giant *Araucaria Imbricata*, with its pyramid of green, closes in a vista of Rhododendron and Kalmia. This tree seems strangely to affect the imagination when from below one looks up into its thorny mystery. The flattened branches stir in the lightest breeze like open, waving palms—the waving of hundreds of beckoning warning hands. A little rose-bush, which June lights up with roses of a wonderfully brilliant pink, dwells in the grass near the tree, in its season shining like some small beacon to point the way.

Mr. Charles Herrin (Frost's successor as head gardener), in his notes to the Royal Horticultural Society's Conifer Conference in 1892, says of this celebrated Araucaria: "It is said to be the largest and best furnished specimen in Britain, and probably

in Europe. It has now reached the height of seventy-five feet, with a girth of nine feet and a spread of branches forty feet in diameter. Beneath the spot where the tree now thrives was once a gravel pit, which was filled up when the ornamental lake close by was made." This may account for its luxuriant growth. When the lake was cleaned out, Frost threw the material under the cedars, &c. When he wanted it for use he found it all matted with cedar roots. He took the hint, and made a habit of top-dressing the trees, and to this he ascribed most of his success. A great many other Araucarias adorn the place. One, planted in 1830, was the gift of King William the Fourth. Thirty-five years after, when it was nearly thirty feet in height, this tree had (through over-crowding) to endure the risk of transplanting—and survives. The most remarkable trees are those forming the Araucaria group, seven or eight trees;—the male specimens all brown at top, with the curious tufts full of pollen, and the females less bunchy in habit, but crowned with great green bosses of cones.

On a summer-house near the Pinetum are the words—full indeed of significance: "*Pulcherrima Pinus in Hortis.*" Another

temple-like summer-house near is called "The Chancellor's Seat," from having been erected when Lord Grenville became Chancellor of Oxford. Not far off there is also a stone seat with a history. When old London Bridge was pulled down, and the materials sold, Lady Grenville purchased one of the grey stone alcoves; and it was set up where it now stands, on the borders of the lake.

The cedar avenue (planted also in 1830) is three-quarters of a mile in length, and numbers 140 trees. Even when the sun shines full upon the avenue at noonday, it is the gloaming there. Under the trees, passing between their pillars of darkness, there is the feeling of a "*Salle des pas perdus*"; so silent in winter is the russet carpet autumn spread there, so dim the summer blue of bugloss — whose sad flowerlets pale within the deep perennial shades. At almost every turn in the open ground one comes upon some rarity — trees brought from beyond sea, in former years when transit was slower and less easy than it has since become.

A flourishing oak, not far below the entrance to the cedar avenue, goes by the name of the Boscobel Oak. Near it a stone bears the following inscription :—

THIS TREE
RAISED FROM AN ACORN
OF THE OAK WHICH SHELTERED
CHARLES II. AT BOSCOBELL
IS PLANTED AND CHERISHED HERE
AS A MEMORIAL
NOT OF HIS PRESERVATION
BUT OF THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE ANCIENT AND FREE MONARCHY
OF ENGLAND
THE VERY SOURCE OF HER PROSPERITY AND GLORY.

Not a few in number are the memorial stones set up in various parts of Dropmore and inscribed with lines composed chiefly in Latin. These stones bear witness to a lost epoch, when men had time—time to think and time to devise, and to carry out ideas of poetical and thoughtful grace, as they walked amidst the trees of their garden.

Under "The Three Brothers" trees—three oaks on "the Birthday Ground" as it is named—we find one such stone engraved on both sides:—

ANNO SALVTIS
MDCCCXXIX.
DIE OCTOBRIS VICESIMO QVARTO
HANC QVERCVM
HIC PONI VOLVIT
A. B. G.[1]
IN GRATIAM MARITI SVI
HVIVSCE VILLÆ DOMINI
ANNVM ÆTATIS SEPTVAGESIMVM
IAM TVM CLAVDENTIS.
SOLI DEO LAVS.

[1] Anne, Baroness Grenville.

Dropmore

EODEM QVO POSITA EST ANNO
QVERCVS ILEC NATALITIA
DVO ILLAS QVÆ PROPE ADSTANT
GENERIS EIVSDEM
ATQVE EIVSDEM FERE ÆTATIS
ARBORES
PIETATI FRATERNE
DICAVIT
W. W. B. G.[1]
O REM BEATAM AMORIS INSOLVBILI
FRATRES LIGARI VINCVLO.

Endless are the mazy paths and green secluded groves of Dropmore! while the varied colouring of the whole wild sylvan round makes it even to the eye of strangers a very "Joyous-Gard" of all that is most sunny and delightful. Every passing season of the year bears with it some new charm of colour. From the blue lakes and woodland seas of wild hyacinth which flood the woods in earliest spring, on through long hours of June, when the cloudiest days shine out amid the grey, illumined with piled splendours of rose-red rhododendron and golden thickets of scarlet and yellow azalea—through the green monotones of July and August—beyond the richly-burning autumn tints, and far into leafless winter. Even then the withered beech leaves lying in red drifts along the lawns give a

[1] William Wyndham, Baron Grenville.

sense of warmth and life to many a dun November day. . . . Some of the grass walks lead at last into a fair spot called the Octagon Lawn. Entirely closed round with trees, quite solitary and not the way to anywhere, if one comes suddenly upon this sequestered lawn of a summer's morning in full flush of the wild-rose month—it is like an enchanted scene from Fairyland, all wreathed about and garlanded with rosy, scented bloom. There is never much vagrant forest-life of bird or squirrel there; only at times is heard the low chant of a wood-pigeon —"slow to begin and never ending"— making the solitude more deeply lone. From the Root Mount (anciently Stub Mound) the view of Windsor Castle is more extensive than from the South Lawn, with the added grace, of looking across a foreground flaming with rhododendron —where one great flowering camellia stands apart in the pure whiteness of its beauty. From this point is seen the Hog's Back, Hants; Cæsar's Camp in Surrey; Harrow-on-the-Hill, &c. Thence a walk leads down past the Pompeii Seat towards a grand Cedar of Lebanon, first planted among Dropmore trees in 1792. His wide-stretched branches almost hide

the house, in whose arched and green-latticed arcade of great height all along the south front is kept up continuously a brilliant show of colour with variegated masses of flowering plants. Up the trellis climb magnolia and large-flowered yellow jasmine, and roses such as Gloire de Rosaméne and Gloire de Dijon. Near the north-west corner of the house still remains the headless trunk of the single tree (a sycamore) which formerly suggested the title of "One Tree Hill." A Noisette rose now clambers luxuriantly over the bare stem. Dropmore is a place where old times are reverenced, and where a new reign does not necessarily mean changes; so the landmarks of the past remain, lending a greater interest to the present.

Since she lost her husband—the Honourable G. M. Fortescue—in 1874, Lady Louisa Fortescue has lived entirely at Dropmore. She was born a long while ago—in May 1813. There are some, however, whom the years seem to pass by almost without touching, and who may be said to have nothing old about them but their age. The pleasant traditions of the spot are still cherished and carried on in her knowledge of trees and love for

plants of every kind. Few parts of the gardens and grounds are ever left for long unvisited, and summer and winter she lives surrounded with flowers. The long perspective of life for her is thronged with vivid pictures of scenes and persons, manners and customs, that have passed away; and in the midst of an intense interest in all around, the page of memory is at any moment easily turned back, and bygones made to live for us once more.

Lady Louisa's record, in her own words, of an adventure in her youth with brigands near Naples, has something of an old-world flavour :—"We spent the winter of 1830–31 at Naples—my father and mother (Lord and Lady Harrowby), my sister Harriet, and myself. We made various expeditions to places in the neighbourhood, and one day, March the 22nd, we drove to a palace at Caserta. Our *laquais de place*, Giuseppe col Angelo, was with the *cochière* on the box of the carriage. At Caserta we went into a church, and listened to a sermon on the iniquity of robbery. Afterwards we started on our homeward drive in the moonlight; Harriet sat opposite my father, I, with a yellow shawl folded double across my chest and pinned each side, opposite my mother,

who, muffled in a large cloak, was dozing, while my father, with closed eyes, was planning improvements at Sandon. We were going along a straight wide road between vineyards, when, all of a sudden, Harriet uttered a shriek, and we beheld a man standing on the back of the carriage behind my parents. Three other men surrounded the carriage, one on each side, and one at the horses' heads. Meanwhile the servants had been ordered to descend, which they promptly did, and lay flat on their faces on the ground. The man next to me was the most gentle, and had no dagger. The man behind had seized my father by the collar, and was brandishing a stiletto, which gleamed in the moonlight. Of course, they summoned us to give up whatever we had; but we had neither money nor jewellery. My father had some difficulty in getting at his pocket, being encumbered with a cloak over his great-coat, and the man threatened him with his dagger—probably thinking he was fumbling for pistols—at which my mother, who was a tall, powerful woman, sprang up, seized the stiletto by the blade, and struggled with the man. By this time my father had got out his watch and purse and handed them over, coolly telling the man,

in Italian, that he would be found out by means of the watch. Among other coins in his purse there was a double Napoleon. The brigands felt our feet to discover if we had any shoe-buckles, and our ears for earrings, but in vain. We had a duvet covered with black silk and they took that. Harriet was waving her handkerchief frantically, crying out, '*Niente di piu! Niente di piu!*' whereupon they took that also. A scruple of conscience came over me as I remembered that I had on a watch which my eldest brother had given me just before we left England, and which I valued very much. The man felt me all over and I thought he must have discovered it, but the carefully pinned shawl defeated him. We made no resistance and did not cry out, except Harriet's first warning shriek. But during this time all sorts of thoughts crowded into our minds. At last the brigands said we might go. The coachman and the *laquais de place* sprang up into their places, and we set off at full gallop as hard as we could go. And then we began to be very much afraid, for we thought what if we should encounter more of these men and have nothing to give them? We had to stop at the inn at Ponte della Maddalena

to water the horses; and Giuseppe announcing '*Siamo tutti stati Assassinati!*' quite a crowd collected and began pitying us. '*Povere fanciulle, povere fanciulle!*' and hearing where it had occurred, '*Ah! terre di Lavoro!*"

"Giuseppe was very much knocked about by the brigands. He raised his hands with his small-change, out of his pockets, beseeching them, '*Prendete! Prendete! non mi uccidete!*' Just as they were going off they perceived my father's cloak, made a snatch at it, and carried it off. A piece, however, was shut in the carriage door and torn off, which, when the cloak was recovered, was replaced again.

"The men were afterwards caught, and the man who threatened us was sentenced to imprisonment for life. The watch and the double Napoleon were recovered; the duvet too, all slit up. Some time afterwards, in some negotiations between England and Sicily on the subject of Sulphur Duties, the Neapolitan Government desired favourable consideration on the score of their activity in bringing these brigands to justice."[1]

[1] Before this was printed, hardly six months after having recorded the adventure, Lady Louisa Fortescue had looked her last on the beautiful woods of Dropmore. —E. V. B., March 1900.

Seven Gardens and a Palace

Little older than one hundred years, Dropmore, as a finely wooded estate, might seem of comparatively recent date. Yet underlying the newly-planted surface are indications of wood of an antiquity far beyond ken. While digging gravel in 1796, a discovery was made of several large oak trees (not so bad a find on "One Tree Hill"!) lying horizontally. The oaks were found embedded in their leaves amongst a mass of small boughs and branches resembling a peat bog, although the spot is on the declivity of one of the highest eminences bordering the Thames. The account given in Lipscombe[1] is strangely interesting. So immense was the force with which the oaks were uprooted and hurled to the ground, that one of them, the largest, was broken nearly in two. Think what a mighty tempest was that stirred up round about the hill one summer's day, ages agone! Clad in all their glorious apparelling of the heart of summer the great trees fell—for myriads of leaves attest it, lying as they were "compressed together, every fibre and filament in its utmost perfection, even the younger twigs pre-

[1] G. Lipscombe's "Antiquities of Buckinghamshire," vol. iii. p. 224.

serving all their silvery whiteness as well as their texture, as fresh as if just severed from the living tree. At the time of discovery the leaves admitted of being turned over, like the dry leaves of a paper book."

Although the story of the Great Pitt Diamond, told in the correspondence of Governor Pitt and his son Robert, is already given to the world—an account of Dropmore, however slight, would seem incomplete without some mention of it. The diamond is as inseparably connected with Dropmore as with the Boconnoc estates and land in Cornwall—which were purchased by Lady Grenville's great-grandfather, Governor Pitt, with a part of its price.

It was in 1701 that Ramchund, a diamond merchant, brought down to Madras a large rough stone weighing over 300 carats, which the Governor, Thomas Pitt, eventually bought. It was taken to England, and the business of getting it properly cut entrusted to the Governor's son Robert. This cost both father and son enormous anxiety, since in both size and weight it had to be very greatly reduced. Great pieces were sawed off, and the process "licked off a world of money." In the end it became an entirely perfect

stone of the best water. The letters always allude to it as the "grand concern" or "affair." Robert Pitt writes: "Your grand concern . . . 'tis a most glorious sight to see. . . . It will not come *net* above 140 carats, which still, being not be-paralleled, is as inestimable as if it were much more." He writes in 1707: "It is a perfect star to look at, and has no other defect than a chapman to buy it." Ultimately it was sold for £125,000, Philippe, Duke of Orleans, Regent of France, becoming "chapman." In 1792 the diamond was valued at twelve million francs. Stolen during the French Revolution, it was recovered, and Napoleon set it in the hilt of his sword. At the Great Exhibition in Paris, in 1867, it was shown among the Crown Jewels of France. A crystal model of the great diamond in its true "polite state" is preserved at Dropmore, where it occupies a place on one of the shelves of a cabinet filled with many precious things — reliquæ of long-dead sovereigns and famous men.

"The Cottage on One Tree Hill" has never failed in its historic or human interest. Yet after all — the true glory of it has grown up in its beauteous trees and gardens, which have been, and are,

the delight of thousands who constantly pass through from lodge to lodge, or are permitted to spend long hours of summer sweetness in its gardens and greenwood. The manor of East Burnham, and the beautiful woodland known as Burnham Beeches, were among the many purchases made by Lord Grenville of lands adjoining or near to his estate of Dropmore, the story of which, the following sketch may not unfitly close :—

Burnham Beeches in the Spring.

It is now many years ago since an old man in the village of Burnham used to describe to me the charm of Burnham Beeches in the early mornings of May, when the wood resounded with the cuckoo's call and the songs of innumerable birds. He told me that I must be there before 6 A.M. I never went; for the Beeches are near four miles off, and the long dull lane to Burnham lies between them and this house. And now the place is so overrun with noisy crowds during the finest season of the year, that residents in the neighbourhood mostly feel themselves shut out. Late last evening, however, I found my way to one of the

beautiful outskirts, where it is all blue underneath the trees with myriads of wild hyacinths, and a king-cup bordered streamlet runs through the deep, wooded dell. A most sweet-voiced nightingale sang from a budding thorn, close to a wild cherry-tree, white with blossom. So the bicycle was leant up against a bank, and I thought to wander among the bluebells, and spend with them a heavenly half-hour. Alas! they were all trampled and desecrated by many feet and many gatherers, and all the pleasure they might have given was for that time spoilt.

Like most fair spots within easy reach of London, Burnham Beeches are spoilt in summer for any but the holiday people. Their solemn shades are not perhaps so outrageously misused as in former years, when picnic fires were kindled unforbid within the hollows of the oldest trees. A great number of these are now mere shells, hollow shells, which yet have life enough left in them to support their giant limbs, sometimes rich in foliage, always gnarled and knotted and yawning with wide-open holes, or curiously knobbed, like grotesque faces in a dream. Blackened with smoke, these grand old hollow trees remain, while almost every one, whether

sound or hollow, is defaced by initial letters cut large and scrawled all over the bark. This form of tree defacement has been common to all ages. Shakespeare wrote, "A man haunts the forest that abuses our young trees with carving Rosalind upon their bark." The custom still continues; and would that it were one man only and one Rosalind who thus haunted the Beeches! Their name is legion; so many are they, and so scant respect have they for the age or the picturesqueness of these ancient foresters, that few indeed have escaped their sign-manual.

On Bank Holidays, also, is this most perfect bit of landscape woodland ruined. In "the Plain," as it is called, there are donkey races and booths, and all kinds of almost riotous amusements, which are unworthy and entirely destructive of the quiet which should make the charm of sylvan solitude like this. Time was when the Plain was a broad quiet stretch of short green turf shaded by the long shadows of magnificent trees. A little narrow foot-path was worn along the centre, with a few carriage-wheel tracks. It is now just a dry sandy desert. New roads through the wood there are, which

run very smooth and comfortable. Yet one sighs at the recollection of old dim forest tracks of the past. True, our vehicle would often stick half-way through the bog; or we had to follow on foot intricate ways deep in fern amongst the wondrous boles of age-worn trees. To cross over between the ponds and steer to East Burnham across the common might involve a wetting, and to find the road to "Egypt" through groves of young birch was a mystery hard to follow. Yet still, we loved the place better in those days of peril and difficulty than now, when there is a service of omnibuses from Slough, and we can drive at ease, in carriages and flys, straight through the beeches, and all about. None of these drawbacks, however, can lessen in any degree our lasting gratitude to the Corporation of London for so nobly coming forward, in 1879, to save the place from the builders' hands, and preserve it for the public enjoyment for ever.

We find in Lysons' "History of Bucks" that what are called the Chiltern Hundreds meant originally the office of stewardship of the Beechwoods, *i.e.* to keep them clear of robbers and highwaymen. No sinecure this in the troublous times of

old! It is well known that Buckinghamshire was covered with a dense forest, which reached from the Forest of Dean, in Gloucestershire, to Epping Forest, in Essex. Burnham Beeches is a little corner still remaining of that primeval forest. The extent is only about 375 acres, a wild and beautiful spot near to London, in the heart of one of the most civilised countries in the world. Small as it is, it carries some of the grandest amongst the old trees still left to us in England. The years of the life of a beech do not, it is generally believed, much exceed two hundred. Yet, so far as can be judged by their outward aspect, the Ancients of Burnham Beeches must have weathered the storms of many a long century more. Reliable records of their history do not appear to exist. The local tradition is that Cromwell's soldiery pollarded the trees—for pollarded they are throughout the wood. Not only did they mutilate them thus, 10 feet from the ground; they also daubed the denuded tops with red paint, in order that at first sight they might be mistaken for a company of red-coated military.

The legend, however, seems at variance with the fact of the enormous growth of

many, out of whose pollarded tops sprout huge branches, themselves resembling trees rather than the limbs of a tree. But for the notorious Parliamentary bearing of nearly the whole of Buckinghamshire one might think tradition was reversed, and that the forest of Burnham had been beheaded in honour of the Martyr King. Such things have been known in instances other than the Duchess of Monmouth's park. Another idea has been that the trees were lopped to feed the cattle. There were no common-rights, however, at Burnham, and it is certain that the pollarding was all done at one time, after the victims were already old and well stricken in years.

The dead, dry beechen leaves lie thick and red upon the ground over the larger part of Burnham Beeches. So does their story rest hidden—buried deep under the long, slow lapse of time. Whether tradition be true or false about the date or reason for the pollarding of the beeches, the unique and almost savage beauty of the place remains to this day.

I think, without doubt, that winter is the time to go there and see it in perfection, for then the intervening veil of bare young wood growing up around them in

many parts does not interfere with the outlines of the more aged trees as when it is full leaved. Yet how can one forget the gold of an autumn day or the emerald spring-time, shimmering all over with myriad points of tender green? for what colour can compare with the young leaves of beech? It is in May and earliest June, not in winter after all, that we must own the fullest pleasure in the woods. On May Day the sun shone gloriously and we journeyed to the Beeches. Notwithstanding that the Plain and all the loveliest glades just thereabouts were already occupied by visitors undeterred by the cold of the early season, we spent among the trees an hour or so of pure delight.

A great ruin lying in the grass beside the stream caught the eye at once. One of the hugest giants had fallen and broken to pieces. Cyclists with their wheels surrounded the ruin, so we turned and roamed farther and farther into the russet woodland depths, where soon the echoes of the noisy crowd became more faint and fainter, till lost in distance. The dry, cushioned moss invited us to rest, and for long we listened to the organ-music of the wind among the weird, white, twisted shapes of the grove where we sat. It was a steep

slope, more mountain than hill, clothed with these strange fantastic beech from the summit down to the valley below. Beyond, the ground rises again in masses of close plantations. Such varied scenery within so few acres is a thing hardly known anywhere else. Well might the poet Gray describe the Beeches as "a little chaos of mountains and precipices . . . just such hills as people love to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous." Under some grand beech Gray would sit whole mornings, and "grow to the trunk," as he expresses it, while "the trees dream out their old stories to the wind."

Spring never brings her flowers here, for nothing flowery ever grows under beech. On the other hand, you are safe from lightning, which never strikes a beech tree, and the abundant moss is very lovely. It grows in two shades of green, intermixed in mottled clumps and patches. There is the commoner sort of rich olive green, and a paler shade like *eau de nil.* These mosses put on a fresher glow when spring draws near, and both in winter and summer glossy, glittering holly clasps round in a close embrace the knees of

many an old gnarled tree. Spring flowers would almost seem out of character amid these stern survivals of the past. Yet the outlying edges of the wood in May are spangled with a wealth of bright stellaria and wind-flowers.

A very old woman, the last lace-maker in Burnham, long ago brought me a posy from the Beeches. Tied up in the centre of it, among the little common wild-flowers, was just one green butterfly-orchis, the only one I ever beheld in this county, before or since. Who that has once known the evening perfume of the green orchis can ever forget it? It is as singular as the flower itself.

From the heart of the Beeches the "sportive squirrel and timorous hare" have disappeared since Gray's time. Sometimes may be heard the gurgle of a nightingale, the subdued twitter of finches, or the voice of a stock-dove in meditative mood. But, as a rule, wild birds and beasts are seldom heard or seen there. It is said, however, that, towards the end of their season in England, nightingales flock to Burnham Beeches from all parts of the kingdom, to hold a last grand midnight concert. (I should like to have a ticket of admission!) It is

certain that glow-worms—as is only meet they should—attend the concert. For often the country people, returning home that way on late summer nights, pick them up and carry off the little living lamps on their hat-brims. It is a little hard to find the right direction for the camp or moat, a desolate, secluded spot near the north-western boundary. All authentic history of it is utterly lost, the same as in every other part. Even the name is changed. Twenty years ago it was Hardicanute's Camp. Now it is more commonly known as "Harlequin's"; so also the finest of all the great trees, which used to be the King Beech, is to-day the Queen's Beech. Hardicanute's Camp is a ghostly place to wander in alone! Surrounded by a deep moat 15 ft. wide, whose waters are black as ink, crossed at one angle by a narrow little isthmus. Should you visit the camp even in the merry month of May, a kind of depressing influence will make you unwilling to linger long. The day may be bright and breezy, every budding roadside plant putting forth its strength in freshest green, and happy little hedge-birds in the fields and lanes hopping and flying hither and thither. On the way to the camp everything in Nature may seem instinct

with life and gladness, till the moat is crossed into the shades of the ancient camp, where chill and solemn calm prevails. There is certainly something uncanny in the intense stillness! Could an antiquarian search be made by digging, the question sometimes asked whether the camp had been Roman or Danish might be settled. In one corner a quantity of flint chips seem to point to a workshop having existed there for the fashioning of flint implements. A fine javelin or spear-head was found here, and doubtless underneath the rough moss and rank grass tufts more such treasures may lie concealed. Wood has grown up on both sides of the moat, and trees stretch across it their lichened interlacing boughs.

There can hardly be anywhere a bit of wild English land of the same small extent more beautiful, more strange, than Burnham Beeches. Photographs give well the strangeness, but neither painting nor poetry can quite do justice to the beauty of it.

Mr. F. G. Heath, twenty years ago, published a little book full of appreciative love for every nook in the little forest he worked so hard and so successfully to rescue, for the permanent benefit of the public. For myself, though familiar with

the place for many years, it is only truth that each time I go there I seem to find a fresh surprise, fresh points to admire in the mazes of its sylvan loveliness. And not infrequent is the aspiration, for some springtide of a far-off future—the hope that even the poorest of an unborn race of holiday-makers in Burnham Beeches may come to know, that better than all other so-called enjoyments of life, is a heartfelt love of Nature for Nature's self.

An Impressionist Sketch:

The Old House of Huntercombe and its Garden

Near Windsor

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Playtime in the Garden

AN old house full of echoes." Thus was the place described the other day by the ancient dame who lives in the cottage at the gate. Full of echoes it may have been (it is without them now!), but they told no history of it, and none of any special interest is known. The broken haft of a Cavalier's sword, found somewhere near, hangs on a nail in the old hall; but I never heard of any fighting about the place. The Abbey with which the house was connected is only a stone's-throw distant, and was quietly dissolved in 1539. A few scattered threads of tradition, and one or two meagre records preserved in county histories with the names of the many different owners, are about all that now is known. Something of the aspect of the place seventy years ago may be gathered from a forgotten book, "Tales Round a Winter Hearth," by Miss Jane Porter,

published in 1826. The authoress says that the idea of her story first came to her whilst living for some time in Huntercombe House.

"My chamber in the old house of Huntercombe, a fine old house in the neighbourhood of Windsor. . . . Its thick walls once composed part of the ancient priory of Burnham, and was the residence quarter of the Prioress of the Order of St. Magdalen of Jerusalem.[1] The ruins of the Abbey of Burnham stand about a mile or two off the Windsor high-road; but at no greater distance than across a wide green lane or sheep-track, they afford a beautiful object from the western windows of the still delightfully habitable mansion of Huntercombe. Part of the roofless nave of the little chapel still remains, with its mouldering traceried window, and some broken arches of the cloisters. A shattered avenue of oaks leads to a large circular embankment. The fishpond of the convent, now dry, was once surrounded by a broad green terrace. . . ."

Time the unscrupulous—the great uni-

[1] Burnham Abbey, a convent of Benedictine nuns, was founded by Richard, Earl of Cornwall and King of the Romans, 1265.

versal picture destroyer—has long since obliterated much of the quiet scene depicted here. The picture is now so thoroughly repainted that but little remains of the older work. Alas for "the wide green lane"! This gradually became a sort of drift road for the driving of cattle from Windsor to Burnham, and then a hard, well-frequented highway. The abbey ruins are not very much altered in appearance, and they have long been made into cattle-sheds and pens. The fishpond, half surrounded by willow garth and oak scrub, is no longer dry, though the oaks which shaded it are felled. No mention of the grove, which almost overshadows the house, is in Jane Porter's description. In her day "shattered oaks" would have been held more to savour of romance. Had she examined the four-and-twenty old limes individually, the initials and dates carved deep in the rugged bark of most of them might have seemed quite as suggestively romantic. Though the quaintly shaped letters and figures have become rather spread and confused during this last quarter of a century, yet "1667," the oldest remaining date, is still distinctly legible. In Lipscombe's "History of Buckinghamshire" occurs this mention of

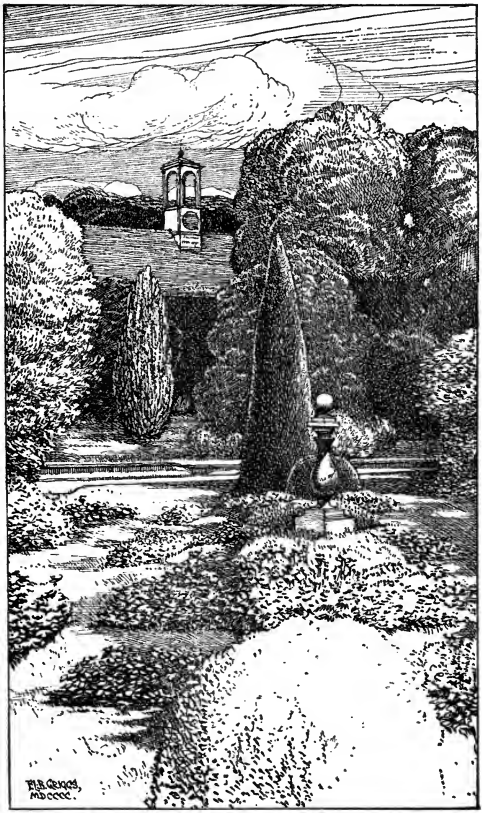
Huntercombe in the account of Burnham Abbey :—

"The mansion-house of the convent, said in the time of Willis[1] to be entirely standing, was in the shape of an *L*, but only used for holding implements of husbandry—corn, hay, &c.—the tenant living in a little house near it, where probably the chief hind anciently lived."

Many a narrow escape the "little house" must have had, in former years, of being pulled down or modernised. A comfortable eighteenth-century cottage was added to it, and all its walls and windows are now embedded in the "leafy vine" (or rather honeysuckle). But the untouched oldest part, with decaying wooden framework, out of which the narrow old bricks are loosening, is as picturesquely crooked as heart can wish, and is dwelt in by the gardener who made the garden.

Huntercombe Manor must have deteriorated to farm uses after the Evelyn family (George Evelyn belonged to the Nutfield Evelyns, and was cousin to the celebrated John Evelyn) had died out of possession, and after the reign of the Eyres who succeeded them. George Evelyn did a great deal to the house. He pulled

[1] Willis was born in 1682.



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down and rebuilt a part of it. At the four corners of the handsome Elizabethan stairs are his arms with the griffon; and there is much fine stucco work of that period in the ceilings, along with painted gods and goddesses by Verrio and his pupils, who lived near while decorating Windsor Castle. I know of no improvements carried out by Thomas Eyre, except the weathercock surmounting an open bell-pinnacle on the stables' roof, and bearing his initials—"T^E. E. 1770." Up to within a few years since, schoolchildren passing in the lane would point to the leaden man-in-armour inside the pinnacle, calling out, "Old Noll." Enough to make the Royalist Evelyn turn in his grave! His quiet rest in Burnham Church was not, so far as I have heard, disturbed by the destruction of his "exquisitely kept gardens" and the desecration of his "stanch old house." That much and that only—excepting that it was "a pretty seate in the forest," and had at least one "parqueted floor"—do we know, from a brief note of the visit here of John Evelyn, in "Evelyn's Diary," of 1679. It must have been in quite the latter end of 1700 that the place became a farm for a time. It was then most likely that the "noble cork tree" met its fate.

It was seen by the Rev. W. Cole (who, I fear, was rather a twaddler) in November 1774, then "in full leaf and green, and was then shedding its acorns, being of the ilex kind, many of which I picked up under the tree. It was supposed to be a hundred and fifty years old at least." When the light lowers on summer evenings one can sometimes still trace the furrows of the plough within the smooth surface of the lawn. But of the tree no vestige remains. I suppose not a flower was left in what had been George Evelyn's garden enclosure. The boundary of the eastward wall may have been left standing until Lord Grenville's time, 1810, or thereabouts. It had a fine ironwork[1] grille in it, giving access to the bowling-green. *Le goût anglo-chinois*, as the French last century in derision called our English gardening of the day, would account for the demolition of the wall, with a view of enlarging the pleasure-ground and letting in the country beyond. Then, also, must have been destroyed the yew hedge ten

[1] Removed to the Garden Terrace, Dropmore. Huntercombe became Lord Grenville's in 1810 or 1812, the property afterwards passed to the Hon. George M. Fortescue, then to Lady Elizabeth Wells, and in 1870 from her son, Grenville G. Wells, to the Hon. and Rev. R. C. Boyle.

feet through whose tradition still survives; along with the fact that it was made into chairs at "Wickham."

Mingling with the songs of birds this April day, in the full spring-tide of their melody, is heard another music, which surely is the very poetry of sound—the sound of the wind among the branches of the budding, sun-steeped elms, that stand in a wide, almost unbroken quadrangle round the house.

Little more than two hundred years ago the house stood within the forest (a great wood in which might roam one hundred hogs). Year after year a few fronds of green bracken will still sprout up, and there is a tangle of furze growing in the waste by the side of the high-road; nothing else remains to show that the country has been desolated of wood. No heed seems to have been taken of the ancient covenanting of the Manor, to except "the great trees and stadells" from profit of the axe. Agriculture claimed all. In those dim times when Burnham Abbey held sway, little might be known outside of what went on within walled places such as these, in the midst of such woodland wilds, with no public roads passing near. Slender indeed are the surviving traditions, but

that there was no rose-leaf rule in the convent or the prioress's house, seems clear enough from the few that remain.

All over the garden, little old tobacco-pipes are dug up from time to time. Inveterate smokers the gardeners of a century back must have been, judging by the quantities of pipes they left about! Funny little narrow-mouthed pipes, all with stems broken off to within an inch or two. It is the fashion of the day to collect, and so it became my habit to collect all sorts of rubbish, and the tobacco-pipes, &c., have a shelf to themselves. The other shelves in the cabinet contain, along with fossils picked up from the gravel walks and roads, shreds and shards of old china and earthenware that have come to light among the cabbages and gooseberries in the kitchen garden. It was mostly after rain they would crop up to the surface. How amusing it was to pick up the bits, and trace in fancy the changing taste of the changing tenants of the house! The supply, however, was not unlimited; and in these days to pick up a bit of a familiar Dresden plate, or a chip out of one's own blue delft, is not so satisfactory. Among the rest there is the curious brown ware of Elizabeth's reign;

that might have to do with George Evelyn's. One morsel of very early earthenware, I dream, may have been part of the prioress Alice Baldwin's best beer jug. It is a coarse, heavy make; dull blue within, and smeared in white outside. Shards of old blue Nankin were found everywhere, and may have been Mrs. Evelyn's hobby; and one reflects what awkward housemaids she had! Then comes an interval; and then Mrs. T. Eyre's lovely Queen Charlotte's lily pattern Worcester tea-things share in the common smash. Wedgwood then has its turn: a black teapot, and sage-green milk jugs, with patterns of goats and children. Then Spode and Lowestoft, &c.—often the very bit that bore the mark. A little piece has painted on it in pale green, a cottage by a lake with a bridge: a curious ware, probably well known, to the few who know.

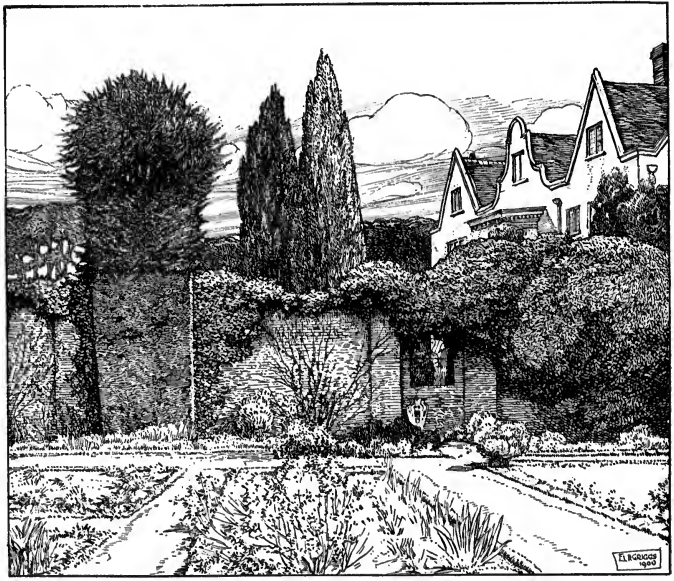
A hardware garden, it will be thought, this reads like! and it may remind some of Queen Mary's parterre of coloured glass still existing in Perthshire. The garden ground of Huntercombe is, however, productive of better things than old potsherds. Violets love it well, and here they flourish *con amore*. White violets overspreading everywhere make one think of the sacred

vine, which, "when it had taken root, filled the land." In February and March the whole garden sparkles with violets. The all-pervading wild white ones, among the rugged stones of the rockery, run and play in sportive waterfalls of snowy foam, tumbling over into seas of purple violets, intermingling, and fretting them into whiteness. There is scarcely a rose or iris clump in all the garden that violets, white or blue, do not cluster round. Yet, long ere summer, leaves and all, they are gone—who knows how? "*Où sont les neiges d'autan?*" Does any garden-lover now grow the old-fashioned dark purple double violet? (I believe it is the double of the "Russian Czar.") Time was when no garden was without it. About half-a-dozen plants of it came from a Scotch "garden that I love." These existed wearily for five years under conditions—in partial shade—against which their soul rebelled. Then came to me the conviction that they wanted a south wall. So the plants were divided, and put close in among the peaches under the old kitchen-garden wall, and rich indeed is the return they make. All through last summer's drought I nursed them myself, putting leaf-mould about the roots of them, with

the comfort of stones and plentiful watering. I had almost forgotten them in the winter months; till one day at the end of March, opening and coming through the wilderness gate in the peach wall, I was suddenly surprised by a great fragrance of violets. The whole air was suffused with the sweetness of them. Looking down, there at the foot of the wall shone a thick line of deepest purple, the flowers so large and full that the green leaves scarce showed between. Grown thus, the double Russian is a grand outdoor violet, rivalling the "Marie-Louise" or "Lady Home Campbell" of the frames, and following them in immediate succession. In every border grow the violets — green cushions set thick with amethysts, or sewn with pearls of silver. And they are never gathered! Not alone does a fortnight's beauty in the garden mean barely two days in the house, but there are those who do not care to despoil the garden — who share the poet's foolish faith, that "every flower that blows enjoys the air it breathes." So the jewelled cushions are a long delight. In the season of violets a stranger entering would say, "It is a Violet garden." A little later on it is all daffodils, with a sprinkling of angel's-

tears. Later still, a garden of primroses lit up with "many-coloured tulips bright." Then, it is flooded with the amber of wall-flowers, or the scarlet of anemone. All May is a realm of iris, supreme in rainbow hues of gold and lilac; while in "royal June" it is as a page from the Rose-garden of Sâdī.

It is over twenty-five years since our first improvements were attempted, and the garden of Huntercombe replanted and newly laid out. Everything has taken root and grown, and I see no glaringly false step. Yet, even while contemplating what I think to be success, an impossible desire presents itself. "What if every improvement were done away, and the garden put back once more as we found it!" Common-sense replies, "Any one might design and build as sweet a garden as this, but to bring again the dear rubbishy old-world of the other one, with the dismal shrubberies where the nightingales sang half the night close to the windows—that is work for the magician." It was only an idle thought-wave, which brought back the vision of a long past summer morning, when through the wide glass doors opening upon the garden, right across the dewy lawn one



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could see the low-branched elms in the meadow by the pond, where the cows were grazing. The early sunshine slants across a hawthorn bush, white with may. An old market woman with her basket on her arm passes the door, to ask the gardener "if he's got some flowers or a bunch of herbs for me to-day?" The green woodpecker echoes his harsh laugh from one of the elms. Far off, showing faint and grey in the haze of distance, one can see the outline of the round tower of Windsor Castle. Nothing now of field or castle is seen beyond the lines of close-clipt yew hedges. The quick growth of them has been rather marvellous: some, being kept low, are only eight or ten, some are twenty feet high. They are crenellated and buttressed and pinnacled, and finished with square bastions; arcades and doorways and windows are cut through them. Single pyramidal yews and conic spires stand on the lawns. Every rounded, single yew must aspire at the top: to be rounded at the top gives heaviness.

The place was once described as "a garden of quincunxes and of *arte topiaria*." Peacocks and green men, however beloved of the topiarius, find no place here; nor do I know where the *fives* alluded to

now are. Four box-bushes are clipt round like big balls, and on the lawn near the house is a bower of box with a seat within, known as "the Box Seat" (pleasantly so named by an accomplished whip). Long festoons of ivy span the lawn; there is a sun-dial on the bowling-green, and gates of iron scrollwork let into the old red-brick walls.

A photograph of Huntercombe, done some time in the sixties, shows the oblong-shaped lawn before the house laid out in flower-beds, with tall tree-roses which bordered a broad gravel walk. The garden was otherwise featureless. Like the country surrounding it, it was (and is) quite flat; there were no bosky paths or green surprises of nut-tree close, nor hidden grassy ways or pleasant orchard corners. The whole place could be seen at a glance. About twenty-five years ago, one dark November evening, pacing round and round the dull lawn in the cheerless melancholy dusk, I pondered what could be done to give character and interest to such a dreary flat. And then it flashed, "If there could be trim yew hedges! And so the hedgerows—now the garden's glory—began at once to be planted. A low yew wall, with tall finials, was built

first. It was meant as a semblance of a terrace walk. Gradually year by year more hedge was added, until the lawn became enhedged all round. With luck, and a first-rate gardener, there was never a failure; and these yews—reputed slow-growers—made rapid progress. Given a good soil and proper treatment, I do not see that yew need grow much slower than beech, and it certainly outstrips holly. This is the simple recipe to get an effect quickly, with endurance also:—The plants to be three feet high, put in very close together. Throw in bucketsful of water about the roots; cover up, and clip the third year. In a garden one always has to wait three years, I find, before new things begin to tell. In any case "yew is worth our patience, for their perennial verdure and durableness." In his "Sylva" Evelyn considers it "preferable to any plant I have ever seen for beauty, and a stiff defence."

To carve out windows in an old yew hedge is a good trial of skill and patience! Yet an attempt has just been made here, with one of about forty or fifty years old. The first intention was simply to lower the hedge some six feet, leaving square bastions at either end. The work was

barely begun, however, before it was felt that deep embrasured window-openings near the top might look more strange and charming. And now the many-windowed hedge is—fancifully, at least—a ruined city wall or rampart, rising straight up out of a grass-green water (that is, a bit of lawn). Along the top is a range of outlooks from ruined casements of the past. To everybody, perhaps, my old city wall will be nought but a mutilated hedgerow. I do not expect the magic charm of it to be any such thing to others! In the garden, if anywhere, is the place where fancy's bred; and there, if anywhere, should be found "the light that never was on sea or land." Before leaving the green yew-ruin and passing on, it may be explained that a dullish walk and honeysuckle wall are in the shade at the back of it. So, a reason for my windows; for in a garden there must be nothing gloomy. The cheerful day must be let in whenever practicable. Many a little tract of wild nature, though in outskirts of the garden, may well be left untamed for our delight. In time, the spot will come to be full of sweet wild weeds and field flowers in their season. Earliest violets, white as ivory, in the grass, will make for us a little lawn

of fragrance. Tiny errant gems of forget-me-not, bird-sown, will look up innocently as we pass by, and we prize them more than all our turquoise garden-beds. I know dandelions are wrong, and they ought not to be there at all; but it is an exquisite pleasure to peep round the end of an apple espalier, and see hundreds of dandelions in full splendour of their great yellow suns, in a green firmament of orchard grass! The flowers that come of themselves give joy as great in its way as ever is the joy of contemplating our well-regulated beauties in the borders. At this very moment (April 26) there glows everywhere a purple radiance of chance-sown Honesty, whose mellowed light illuminates each shady place.

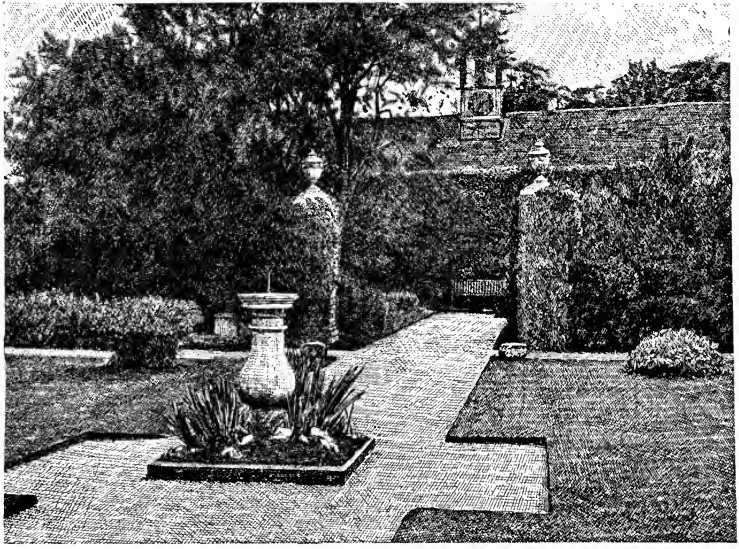
It must be laborious to plan out a garden on paper. Not much labour of that sort was expended upon the garden of which I write. Year after year it was shaped into form and dignity, as the eye felt its way, so to speak, and little by little knew—or thought so—what was wanting to perfect the place. But this is my secret! The critic world at large must believe the whole proceeded from a deep-laid plan. . . . Ever since 1872 it has been growing on insensibly, until at last

some realisation of the first vague idea seems on the eve of attainment. A stage long wished, long waited for, has arrived: the state well known in art, of a picture near to its completion, when every little touch tells, as a thousand never did before.

Alas! a less happy moment also is at hand, when, if the character of the garden be not to be lost, much that we have long admired in it must be sacrificed. Even now in our small way we know

> "The watcher's axe is nigh.
> All growth hath bound: when greatest found
> It hastes to die."

With as good a grace as may be, let that trial be met; and meanwhile, let us beware of the ensnaring temptation of "overdoing it." Too many flower-vases, too many sun-dials—even too many trees—are a mistake where space is limited. The vases or other ornaments give finish and interest; but they must be used with reserve, lest their presence interfere with the feeling of repose without which a garden is not perfect. As to what suits it and will succeed in it, the garden itself knows best. By-and-by the gardeners will understand also; and they know well how little use it is to attempt to grow



HUNTERCOMBE

things that won't grow. After two or three seasons, a little dream I had of blue and green has to be given up. A strip of rough elm-shaded grass was sown all over with bulbs of blue scilla. For just one season the dream came true: it was lovely! The next, the blue in the grass had dwindled. Then the first sown bulbs refused to flower, and the latest looked faint and unwilling. The truth at last enforced itself, that scilla will not thrive in grass. They don't like it. At the same time, Nature insisted on her evidence that primroses, wood-anemones and hyacinths, with white fritillary also, rejoice in this special grass strip, and that here of their own free will they love to go forth and multiply. I should be well content with the white fritillary alone—tall-stemmed, each bell uplifted in white purity above the growing grass. Slow in growth as fritillary are, they are very sure. Where they once take root, there they stay for ever, with a constancy unknown in our human world. They may be trusted, however late their coming. For years one purplish-brown and chequered bell has arisen as if by chance at the outmost edge of a border, in the middle of a knot of streaming crocus leaves. Every spring,

when too early I pass by and see it not, I sigh, "Ah, the fritillary is gone at last!" Yet on some other day I look, and it is there, with all its classic grace and its bizarre, plaided kirtle. This one cherished plant of it in the garden, and a misrepresentation of one in blue on an old Dutch tile in my fireplace, for years were the sole fritillaria in the place! In the fresh vigour of its youth, was there ever seen any other flower planned so exquisitely, fashioned so slenderly! The pink symmetry of Kalmia perhaps comes nearest this perfection, with the delicately curved and rounded angles of its bloom.

In mid-April it is hard to turn away our thoughts from the flower-trees! Every garden should possess an orchard within the circle of its charms. Old, grey, lichened apple-trees; and cherries that come first,—and here, at least, are kept for their joy of white bloom. We set no store at all upon the red fruit, nor waste a thought on it, but let our feathered darlings of the fields and garden feast and make merry as they will. Plum bloom is not impulsive, like the cherry, and it has a purer, colder white. It looks as though it knew what it was about! It never over-flowers, and the fruit ripens in an easy, kindly way. Earlier than

either plum or cherry comes the almond-tree, with blossom of pale silvery pink. Poets have sung its praise, comparing it to Hope, as "the silvery almond flower, that blooms on a leafless bough." Curiously blind, as a rule, are the makers of gardens to the untold value, for the fair beauty of them, of flowering trees and shrubs,—or "ornamentals," as in old books. I shudder to remember the almond and the judas trees that I cut down long ago. Old and *leggy* as no doubt they were, they are regretted; while I am humbly learning a new lesson, from little scraps of villa gardens in the outskirts of a neighbouring town, of how to increase the gladness of a garden. In many such, too often joyless enclosures, almonds are planted freely. Perhaps, through the brief season of their bloom, these fairy-trees seen from dull-windowed houses round, may shine right across the petty dust-clouds of the world into the lives of dwellers there. Sad to think of the wasted years, and so much pleasure missed, or so long delayed! Hope whispers, "Not yet too late," so no time shall now be lost in planting groves of starry loveliness to glorify some future springtime of the year. A *Pyrus malus floribunda* (worthy of a more picturesquely

shortened name), at one end of Nut-tree Close, is just now a pink fountain of flowers and buds, flinging up roseate spray into the air. The Snowy Mespilus in the meadow, old and storm-blown, still contrives in March to wear the aspect of a snowdrift; while a hawthorn near at hand, in the later days of spring, serenely rises out of the green grass, a white Alp of May-flower. The double peach (*Amygdalus persica*) is beautiful, and lasts for three April weeks all engarlanded, with deep pink Roses de Meaux! *Pyrus spectabilis* is, I think, more admirable than all other of our flower-trees, with roses larger and more doubly double than a florist's fancy might dare to paint. Most desirable is the old-fashioned Corchorus (the Kerria of to-day) for its warmth-giving orange-colour among the paler "ornamentals." Star-showers from sky rockets arrested as they scatter, could hardly exceed the brilliance of our Kerria, goldenly coruscating in every shady corner of the garden! There has, however, to be much cutting back—and uprooting even—to check the too rapid growth, by which it sometimes threatens to make the place its own.

Much talk there is, nowadays, about "Friendship Gardens." The whole garden

here might deserve to be so called, so much in it is owed to the kindness of friends. Labels are few in number, but memory keeps an unwritten catalogue where the givers' names all are noted. As one year is added to another, and life becomes more full and hurried, familiar names in plant-lore keep slipping out of mind. Not so the names of friends associated with them. From distant counties, or from North Scotland, from the United States, Canada, Italy, Tenerife, Japan, West Indies, India, seeds and plants have arrived. Often they do well, sometimes they grow to be at home with us. But space and much glass is a *sine quâ non;* and these we have not to give them. The great elms that dominate the farther lawn in stately magnificence are not far off a hundred feet in height, while their probable age is well-nigh two hundred and fifty years. A little beyond the shadow of these green giants, niched among some rocky stones, has come to dwell with us a forest tree, just thirteen inches high—whose age is said to exceed the elms by half a century. The little ancient was sent here from Japan, travelling with a tiny pie-dish packed beside him, into which the little old roots were to be replanted on his arrival. The seamed

and gnarled trunk of this minute tree would seem to betray great age. Yet the opinion of the many is hostile to so much as even a quarter of three hundred years having been attained, the age "the long surviving oak" might not disdain. No one believes in the wee tree. No one, that is, except its owner, who holds that the Japanese are capable of anything. Meanwhile the miniature, who knows all about it, with a spread of branches the breadth of a scarlet geranium, unconcernedly lives and flourishes; that it should *grow*, may the powers forbid!

Leaving the venerable Jap to his rocky solitude, where his branches might shelter perhaps a butterfly from the rain, the way leads on to the sunny south porch, where swallows build. Here, an immense Rosemary (*Ros marin*, Sea-dew) has made itself at home for many years. Its bee-haunted innumerable sea-grey flowers, flecked with the fragrant freshness of springing shoots, seem to inspire with joy our going out and coming in. The swallows, however, flying to and fro, never look that way—and to the bees it is only as a treasury of honey.

A Garden of the Lord:

The Grey Stones of Maryculter

Near The River Dee,

Scotland

By a River of the North

"Except for fish and stane and tree,
Ae rood o' Don's worth twa o' Dee."

SO goes the old Aberdeenshire rhyme, and so to this day it holds true. Beautiful Dee! Clean and crystal clear are thy hurrying waters—wild and rocky thy grandly wooded winding way! And still as we follow the little path under the trees on the steep river-bank at Maryculter, the rhyme of an old sweet song, too old-fashioned now to be remembered much, seems for ever mingling with the river's flow:

"Oh murmuring waters, have ye no message for me?
Ye come from the hills of the west,
Where his step wanders free.
Did he not whisper my name, did he not utter one word,
And trust that the sound o'er the rush of thy streams might be heard.
The sounds of the moorlands I hear;
The rustling of heather and fern,
The shiver of grass on the lea,
The sigh of the wind on the hill: hast thou no voice for me?"

Or again, those lines of haunting melody:

"What thing unto mine ear
Wouldst thou convey—what secret thing,
O wandering water, ever whispering?
. . . . . .
Thou water, O thou whispering wanderer,
What message dost thou bring?"

The broad stream on this side runs smooth like liquid glass. Almost one can see right across to the other side the rounded stones that underlie the water. Now and again a swift shadow shoots across, lost ere it can well be fixed by the eye, for big salmon lurk in the brown deeps and shallows; but trees bend over, and the shadow of their waving branches might well deceive the eye that is not a fisher's. The pathway just now is tesselated with little round yellow autumn leaves of birch, and mottled with spotted spoil of sycamore. What an ideal tree is the sycamore! Its shape may not compare in grace with elm or beech, yet how like the tree of some ancient classic idyll. Heavy-foliaged, and casting cool dark shade, beneath which the flocks gather from the noonday heat, or lovers tell the old, old story. Amidst of brighter summer greens, the sycamore will show itself massed in rich brown against the yellow

of an evening background. With parting summer the glamour of the tree departs. For while others still shine gloriously gold and red, the sycamore leaves spot and shrivel and fall untimely soon. Wild cherry have already shed crimson here and there, though the green fringes of the path still are dotted with late bluebells—for wild and stormy weather there has been, when the rain drove down their leaves from the straining trees, and gentle Dee became a huge, dark, foaming torrent, terrible in its power and mass of waters. All day the corn-stooks were hurried along down the eddying swirl, and under the surface the swollen tide was seen to be full of lost corn. Long after dark they who watched on the brink marked still that piteous waste of a hard-won harvest. Though most of the drowned grain would be re-captured below near the river's mouth—dried and turned to use—no poor scrap would the reapers see again of the sheaves they bound so merrily in the sunshine—that day, before the storm. Up the river there, they are fatalists in their way. The corn might have been saved had they set to work in time, when *She* first came down, while they looked on with their hands in their

pockets! The wild weather has calmed a bit since then, and hardly can one believe that this is that same raging flood of yesterday, so softly does the river go. Changeful and full of whims, like a woman, is she, with moods as diverse and as many as of any fine lady in the land. Fair though her aspect now, by nightfall clouds may gather above, and the river, with frowning face, roll drumly and dark from shore to shore. Tawny bracken glows in the sudden break, where the smell of bog myrtle or "Sweet Gale" greets one, coming from across the moss beyond the hill, where a little noisy burn rattles down into the river. The Glen has a sort of miniature grandeur—a tiny bit of scenery, varied with mountain ash and silver birch and fir-trees, and boulders tossed about; and the burn winds through it with many a cascade and little sportive waterfall. There is no sound heard save the harsh cry of an oyster-catcher as he skims away up stream, or the rush of the rapid just above the upper salmon pool. The one heron that haunts the place is quietly fishing among the reeds in the shallows down below the bank. I always look out anxiously for that poor fellow when near his feeding grounds, for well

I know how he "holds his life in his hand," as the saying is, and how for these wary fishings, in the end, his life is bound to pay forfeit to a keeper's cruel gun. None, however, would dream of harming the sandpiper, who, earlier in the breeding season, meets one just here with his over-anxious cry, and little nervous runs hither and thither. "This is it, this is it!" he shrills out, thinking to lead the wrong way to his nest. Not always, indeed, does the sandpiper choose to nest among the thick grasses by the river's brink. Once, at least, I know that he had a nest and eggs under a raspberry bush in the kitchen garden. Indescribable is the fascination of watching the ceaseless motion of the current circling and eddying round and round "the Kelpie's Stone." (Momentous stone where fishers take their stand!) Suddenly, close to it, appears a something sparkling in and out of the water. It is gone in a moment, then it comes up again a little farther down. A salmon at play is one's first thought, with the sun dazzling on its snout and white gills. But no big fish would go *down* stream like that, even in play. Up again! This time nearer in shore. And now it is clear enough that the white is the white breast of a ~~ring~~ water

ouzel or dipper, all wet and glistening. For full five minutes the joyous creature dips up and down, running along the bottom and coming up to breathe. Wholly unalarmed by human eyes so near it, as much at home in the water as out of it, the gambols go on till it is tired, then out it runs upon the sand, shakes its feathers, and is off. Too trustful little ouzel! The enemy accuses you of deadly sin about the fish. It is a false accusation, but that is no matter; and some fatal day a shot is sure to dye your pretty white waistcoat red. In the north these small sportive spirits abound, wherever burn or broad river runs. They can glue their house in some strange way to the face of a rock above the water, and there are those who say that invariably a dry oak leaf is found within the nest.

Beyond the turn in the river—shining now like a silver track—appears in the West a glimpse of faint blue hills, the hills about Braemar. They are miles and miles away, yet the parish of Maryculter long ago stretched away as far. From high corn lands above the brae is seen the whole grand Highland mountain range. Against the gold of the dying day there they stand; ineffable, in solemn tones of

indigo or violet. Fairer yet perhaps, when at noon, suffused with noon-day light, they seem almost to tremble in the air, outlined dreamfully in purest lilac. And now the path stops short near a reedy backwater, the home of water-hens, and there, conspicuously placed in the middle of the weedy water, is a water-hen's nest. How, I wonder, does she learn to fore-know when the river is about to rise in flood? That the bird knows is certain; for she will begin in time to heap up her nest higher and higher till it reaches the point of safety. How does she tell the exact height to which the water will rise? Vain questionings. How do God's wild creatures know everything of this kind, and we, with all our reason, nothing? Turning our steps back towards the house, leaf and downward-bending branch combine in mercifully hiding for the moment the one blot that spoils the scene. A year ago it had not been thought of. Some evil enchanter's wand must have created it in the watches of some black night. The magician of the present day is commerce, and it knows not romance, and to it the name of beauty is an empty sound. So the tall mill chimney with its innate ugliness is there, and sets all the landscape out of

tune. It is well built, so that no tempest may undo it. Here will it stand for ever and for ever, as long as the river flows, an eyesore and unhappiness. Let us not look that way but try to forget; and now this smiling morn stroll on, enjoying each happy interchange of nature's sights and sounds, holding "fresh communings with nature's finer moods," listening "as her silent voices speak their secrets in the soul's rare solitudes."

Other hours I have known when, long after sunset, one would hardly care to loiter, but rather haste along this narrow lonely way, pursued by the sob of the westland winds. The sky is heavy with clouds gathering in a low wide arch above the dim and melancholy west; and the river moves stilly, reflecting back neither dark cloud nor evening gold, flowing on and on, lurid and grey. On such an eve in the drear after-glow, from across the river when winds have dropt, straight from the low black line of firs that crest a rising ground on the other side, will sometimes float across the faintest refrain of a grieving plaint of former far-off years—a dim, forlorn murmur of strange voices—the hum as of a distant town. And then will arise a distant low sough of the wind shudder-

ing through the pines; while the belated wayfarer turns his face the other way and quickens his homeward steps. That ghostly feeling of the hour comes not unseldom to dwellers in our North country, where still lingers on into modern life many a fragment of old superstitions, even as wild heather will linger upon some stony unploughed hillock in a field that has once been muirland. Those black firs mark the site of Agricola's camp, the great Roman encampment of Devanha; it is called in these days "Normandykes," a name which dates from times long after, when the Romans for the moment were forgot. To this day the lines of the immense square can be discerned in a broad green dyke, or built-up road, broken and uneven, and rough with ancient mossy stones. Along the breadth of it, at the top, there was room to drive a chariot and horses. Here Agricola and his army lay encamped. From the farthest angle westward they watched the Picts, entrenched on the distant hill of the Barmekyn of Echt. Seventeen long centuries have run their course since the day when the Roman legions, disheartened and in sorry plight, marched out from Devanha Camp for the last time, leaving their dead—

where to this hour they lie—near the southernmost corner. The pointed spires of fir stand in serried phalanx where Roman spears were uplifted ages agone, and the Roman's work has melted away like "the fabric of a dream." Where the earth lay beaten bare with trampling of armed men and horses in those far years, now grows the green deep-cushioned moss, spangled in summer with white stars of winter-green. The soldiers' clang and noise with all their military life and movement had long ceased; more than a thousand years. The narrow rill that still runs past the camp into the Dee is no more called "the Bluidy Streape;" it is known by a more modern name—only about seven hundred years old—as "the Tempill burn," from the Knights Templars, who once possessed these lands. There is nothing left of the great Roman square except these broken lines. A little thatched cottage leaning up against the old dyke is built with the last remaining entire fragments of the stones, after the most of them had been carted away to build and repair neighbouring farm-houses. The well sunk by the Romans is there beside the cottage, and there the cottager's children play; but the water has been conveyed away in pipes to

another place. It is not many years since it remained the same as the Roman soldiers left it.

A labourer once found in the camp a relic which came into the possession of a fine old tenant-farmer of Maryculter. It was "the sword of Andrea Pereira." (So he described it, from the name engraved upon the blade.) The man had tried to make a screw out of it, but found the iron too soft, so all that was left of the sword was saved. The same old farmer also carefully treasured the key of the Templars' ancient Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

Through embowering trees we follow the narrow way that leads back to the old house of Maryculter. Though so close by the river it is almost hid in trees, so that hardly a chimney nor a corner of it can be seen from the opposite bank. Pigeons, white and grey, sit basking on the roof. They sit in regular order, five or six on either side of the stone moulding, crenellating it in brilliant white against the blue. On a little crow-stepped gable of the oldest wing of the house an aged weather-cock still follows the wind, veering round with uncanny creak, shining like gold when touched by the sun. The

device is the Gordon family crest, a bow and arrow in an archer's grasp, the arrow pointed on a full-strung bow. Pointed to each quarter whence blows the wind, the bow is ready to shoot and trust to fortune: "Fortuna Sequatur." Before the woods were grown, in the beginning of the century, the then Laird of Maryculter, General Gordon, journeying there from his distant castle of Fyvie, would catch sight of the gleam on the weathercock while yet a good way off, down the long approach to the house. The laird used to travel with his team of oxen conveying the luggage and servants in waggons. The vast stone stable at Maryculter where his oxen were stalled still exists. Slits in the heavy walls gave light and air within. There were festivities there the other day, when the new laird, Sir Cosmo Gordon, came home to his inheritance; and the grand tenants' ball then given was held in the building where the oxen used to be. Could the beasts of those old days have previsioned such a gay scene, as they rested in their stalls and chewed the cud in peace, how great would have been their bewilderment! The new house with the crow-stepped gable, built by General Gordon, was added

on to one more ancient. The Templars in their time, from 1127 for 123 years after, possessed broad lands (some 8000 acres) in Maryculter.[1]

In those days they built a preceptory, of which a part still remains within the more recent walls. Curiously little, were the rooms with which men were then so well content! There is one, narrow, and lined now with panels of Jacobean date, at the head of a steep small stair in the oldest bit of the house; this is traditionally known as the Council Chamber. Years ago the door of it in black oak was carried away to a farm-house near. Standing at the head of these stairs, or stepping up or down, a ghostly priest has been heard and seen—but never a Templar Knight! Down below is the kitchen, with vaulted roof and a huge fireplace, discovered by taking down a partition. The oven, on one side complete, is vaulted with beautifully fitted stones, and when discovered was still filled with sand for baking, and the chimney still black with smoke. Wherever else the builders of old saved space, they never

[1] And even to this day "the Maltese Cross" of their successors to the property, the Knights of Malta, cut in stone, is found at times; marking the division of their estate into different portions.

spared it in their kitchen chimneys! Not more than a stone's throw from the house, on the river bank where the ground rises a little eastward of the beech-grove, stood the Templars' church; a little church, dedicated to St. Mary Virgin. It was made so strong and stout, that long after the last of the Templars' lands had been feued away and parted between some of the great neighbouring lairds — generations after the order had been suppressed, and the Knights had gone away—right into the last century and even up to near its close, the little old church remained still the Parish Church of Maryculter. The same old farmer who had the Roman sword (he was born the day that Nelson died and Trafalgar was won) remembers to have seen in his youth the man who was employed "to ding doun the church." It seems to have wanted a lot of "dinging doun," so sound were the walls; to this day, so thick and strong, the existing remnants.

It was in 1787 that the Lords of Session in Edinburgh ordained its destruction, and in that year the ancient church was "described to be sold by auction and transported, and the price applied, so far as it will go, to the building of the new church

and churchyard." The parish and the lately-appointed minister were impatient for its removal, and the action of the Session prompt. So the ungodly auction was held, and the doomed church of St. Mary sold, and many old moss-grown stones of it carted off a mile away up to the hamlet on the hill, over-against the rushing burn of Corbie. Some are yet alive who can mind upon having seen a good deal more of the ruin than the few stones now remaining. It is not so very many years ago since last the morning sun illumined a remaining fragment of the eastern gable, sending a shaft of glory through the empty tracery of the window across the chancel floor, just above the spot which long had been the Pitfodels family burial-place.[1] Long after the auction, however, Pitfodels died and was buried far away in Edinburgh. I remember him when I was a child of four; a very old man, in a long snuff-coloured coat and wig—a very embodiment of snuff.

All that now is left of the Templars' church is a mere sketch of its outline. There are the big foundation stones, with here and there a piece of the ruined wall

[1] John Menzies of Pitfodels had sold the estate to General Gordon of Fyvie.

about two or three feet high. Rounded granite boulders at the corners are half hid under moss and grass and fern. Very small is the space between these lines ; at most ten paces across. A few fragments of worked freestone lying about; a few deeply moulded segments of arch or doorway, show how the construction of the church was the simplest Norman. The freestone scattered round, and the mouldings of red porphyry, must have been brought from a great distance. Nature's sweet charity has here excelled itself, clothing the broken outlines with rich mantling of fine short herbage set with a lovely small growth of wood-strawberry and cranesfoot and potentilla, and many another spreading wildflower. Two or three yews in the full luxuriance of comparative youth fill up the chancel, and seedling ash and sycamore are there. Into the very centre of a tall gean (wild cherry) a dogrose climbs, and falling back in downward festoons tells its rosary of scarlet hips; and there in calm autumn days the redbreast sings, trying its notes for winter use. The south doorway with well-worn threshold may still be traced. Soft green grasses cover it deep, the wild rabbit wears a tiny pathway through them,

and where once the bases of the entrance pillars stood, now nestle bluebells and blue veronica. The nave is full; it is never empty. Deep silence and the stillness of the grave reigns with the congregation gathered there. After they have entered in, none return or go out; summer and winter, day and night, there they lie still and rest. Until about twenty years ago, when they were sent back to the West Kirk of Aberdeen, two stone effigies of a knight and a lady lay on a broad ledge in the chancel. A hundred years before they had been secretly conveyed away for safety to this sequestered spot. Scant care in former years did the ruin of St. Mary the Virgin get, and very rough was the usage of its graveyard. Flocks of sheep and herds of cattle broke through the fences and pastured there, treading with heavy foot the ancient layer-stones. Children, unreproved, made it their playground. Once indeed, as tradition tells, a pack of hounds *louped* the dyke and killed amongst the graves. Even after those days, after a big stone wall had enclosed it all round with a locked gate, the grass grew tall and rank, and melancholy nettles had it all their own way, till it felt most like a grey home of ghosts. Years

fled past, and then some who remembered, came and tenanted the old house, and the place grew to be loved more and more, and tenderest care was lavished upon it. Fresh flowers were laid there, and the grass took on a brighter green. And so onward through years of change the character of the place has changed; the ghosts have fled, and now it is like to some "haunt of ancient peace," in whose deep calm gloom enters not. Many an hour of strange visionary pleasure have I spent within that dim enclosure. . . .

It is a beautiful day—one of these perfect September days of soft blowing breeze, white clouds and sapphire sky, we know so well in the North of Scotland. The stillness is so profound that the little tapping of a titmouse in the trees is heard distinct and clear. Under the deep shade of the beech-grove a narrow door above the river leads from the lawn into the untroubled quiet of the deserted churchyard. There is a pattering like heavy raindrops on the crisp ivy-leaves. It is only a squirrel frisking up and down among the branches, cracking his beech-nuts and scattering down the husks. Here, when we have entered and shut-to the door, it is as if our tie to the outward world were of a sudden snapt.

F. L. B. GRIGGS
1908

Maryculter

The stockdove's murmurous chant from her green twilight in the wooded distance—or the multitudinous passing, with wild clamour, low overhead, of a company of young rooks, does but heighten the feeling of remote seclusion which penetrates this small in-walled space. Tall trees without keep half of it perennially in shade. The other half lights up at noon, though never a daisy has been ever known to cheer the grass. To-day the daisies are not missed, for young Autumn gives of her bounteous store and spares not her burnished gold. I know of nothing quite like this tomb-crowded place, excepting that ancient burial-ground without the walls at Nuremberg. The grey old headstones crowd tottering around, like storm-tossed ships in a rough sea of green. Hardly one of them stands upright; all awry they lean this way and that, alternating with the horizontal slant of broad table-tombs. At night, under the moon, when snow lies heaped between black shadows, it is just a weird disordered army of gaunt forms, and the ruin in the midst is then, "Our Lady of the Sna'."[1] Even for one who loves it well it would feel uncanny to do more than glance in

[1] There was an ancient chapel in Aberdeen so dedicated.

at the moonlit space while holding the door half open, and then, with a shudder, shut and lock it fast. In the blue of a summer's day how different! Then, the whole place is overlaid with moss and delicate flowering grasses, and the grey stones would seem almost to smile under their veil of sweet calm sunshine. The squirrel, tired of nutting in the tree tops, has come down, and skips across the green hillocks holding a beech-nut in his mouth. He comes up quite close without any fear, supposing the loiterer to be a stone like the rest. In a moment the tiny forepaws are busy scratching up the moss, and his nut is lightly buried. A quick glance round, and he's off like a thought scrambling away up the ivied wall. It is a solitude filled with death, yet fraught with life. Greenfinches, greener than the leaves, chirp and play amongst the branches, and many another wild bird makes here its home, besides the leafy "choirs invisible," for whom through all the long days of June this is a chosen retreat. Down amongst the mounds the mould-warp, "the demon mole," is ever silently at work. Beech-nuts are nought to him; he labours in another line. Ever so alone as one may be here, never is there felt any sense of

loneliness or gloom—unless if perchance one stumbles upon a molehill, and in the freshly-turned earth, half uncovered lies—*a rusted nail.* Then, the whole sad human story is laid bare, and for a time the summer's sun is dulled. A little stone-built house in the south-east corner has one little window with outlook on the churchyard. There is nothing gruesome in its aspect, yet it here remains a link with lawless days, when the new-made grave had to be watched all night. Many of these little watch-houses still exist in the corners of old churchyards throughout the country. One such I know with two portholes in the wall whence muskets might be fired.

Once it happened, on a chill November day, from underneath the blackness of a yew tree, there suddenly crept out feebly and shivered at my feet, a little starving ring-dove. Too weak to be afraid, the dove let itself be gathered up and warmed in the hand and carried in to the house-kitchen and fed and healed, for there was discovered a wide, square-shaped, gaping wound. Nigh half of the poor bird's breast had been cut away, to the bone. Nothing ever afterwards came to light, nor was any reply returned to the

inquiries we made, nor any explanation of how a bird so weak and sorely stricken, could have found strength to fly across the broad waters of the Dee. But some there were who heard the story, and secretly remembered the Providence that hears the young ravens' cry; and well they understood, a Hand had guided the flight of the wretched dove and led it to seek sanctuary in the ruins of St. Mary Virgin.[1]

Many a studious hour have I spent spelling out records of the generations that lodge here in the City of Silence, until at last it has seemed as though they were all my own familiar friends and acquaintance. I know their names, and the names of their fathers and mothers and wives and children, and their ages, and the dates of their birth and death and where they lived and died. As for the sound of their voices, and how they looked and how they were clothed—fancy makes all that clear! Every story told here is a simple story—though now and then it breaks off at some little old forgotten mystery which none can read. These records of the past have surely been kept with no common care, and with most

[1] At this date (1898), eight years after, the dove is alive and happy.

rare beauty! The green lettering on the stones has taken very long to complete—a hundred years, or more—and beautiful exceedingly is each finished masterpiece. It is done in *niello* of emerald moss filling in the deep-cut letters. But Time and Nature, so exquisite in their touch, at one point fail. They never know where to stop. After their work has once begun, there comes not any pause. Another few years, and that which now we so wholly admire will be over-done—the bright velvet-green words will have become illegible. This velvet-moss in time grows a little branchy, spreading and thickening, till at last nothing will show save a plain green pall. Even more delicately decorative are the grey lichens creeping in rounds and rings all over the recumbent slabs and upright stones, hiding their surface under silvery tones of grey and interchanging orange. Lichen, however, is remorseless: it will obliterate the longest sentences! From the few (only one or two) more recent intruders of tall polished granite and gilded legend—with what deep refreshment the eye returns to the old last-century table-stones! Compared with our glaring modern fashions of cheap white marble, or even of polished granite, in

how sharp contrast is the chill monotony of these hoary monuments!

It was the old man that does the mowing who meditatively remarked to us one day—leaning like old Time upon his scythe—"It is a verra solemn place." (I wish he had not added, "Seems summat to look at when it's cleaned up!") Solemn as the place is, yet to some it is as a delightful story-book.

The oldest of the stones dates not further back than 1696. Close by the south door, just where church-going feet of long ago have worn away the threshold Sabbath after Sabbath, this old slab lies flat on the ground. When first unearthed, it was found hidden under and deeply overgrown with turf. The inscriptions, though originally well carved in relief, had become almost illegible. These, however, are the words that patience at last made out—

1696

Here lyes ane Honest Vertvovs Man John Mov at who lived in Roth NECK And Departed this life of age . . . years. (illegible)	Here lyes ane Honest and virtvovs wo man Margret spovse of aforesaid Departed Nov. the 14 of age 87 years.

The quaint division of the words had to be, in order to get in the two records in the space at the upper end of the narrow seven foot long layer-stone. All the rest is devoted to hour-glasses, cross-bones, spades, and skulls.[1] The phrase "ane Honest Vertvovs Man" seems to have fallen into disuse after 1722. There is after that, nothing more said of honesty or virtue; it became maybe an understood thing. It must have been by some perversity of fate that "Margret Movat" came to be the *only* woman so described in this place! One calls to mind the great Master Cynic's verdict—supposing its meaning to be thus understood—"a thousand men have I found, and not one woman among all these." Yet here is the honest, vertuous Margret shining alone amongst dozens of the men-kind! Family histories may be traced or fancied, as we read the homely names and dates recorded on these fast wasting, crowded stones. They are long and large, made thus with a thrifty foresight, for then one stone may hold the names of several generations.

[1] "John Mowatt of Old Aberdeen made me 1765. Sabbaths I proclaim. Funerals I toll," is the inscription on the old church bell of Durris. This J. Mowatt may have been a descendant. The bell named "Sclatter-vengeance," might also have been his work.

Indeed the lengthening roll may stretch all down from the top to the very grass, and then run over on the other side, ending up satisfactorily with So-and-so, "the last of the family." On the very verge of the gravel path, near a big stone of 1770, broken in half and leant up against the wall, one stumbles over a flat grey stone of fine, very hard grain, that well resists the weather. The carving is in high relief, worked with wonderful skill and finish, and the words are evenly and clearly cut. Evidently money was not spared, and the work was the best that could be got at the time. Under the initials "M. F." there is a very short inscription; only this: "Here lyes the body of Margaret K—— [initial only] Lawful daughter to Mary Findlay. She died Feb. 1, 1747, aged 15." That is all. Surely there is some sad, forgotten story hinted in those few words! a story never now to be unfolded. Poor child. What painful care her mother lavished in surrounding her with the ghastliest symbolism! The whole large space below the inscription is filled up with the most favourite emblems of the day, as hopeless and full of despair as sad heart could desire. The sculptures are done from the very life. There is the skull, the hour-

glass, the pair of cross-bones, the spade and shovel. Contrary to custom, the death's-head turns mournfully aside, its countenance almost as pathetic as that in Albert Dürer's engraving of "The Knight, Death, and the Devil." The crossed bones are ghastly in their reality, and the hour-glass is a little squat delightful thing one would give worlds to possess. Each stern detail is perfect. And this was the best a mother's love could devise for the adornment with due honour of her child's last bed—Death, Time, and the Grave! No upward thought implied, no faith in the peace of God in Paradise. As to those old-world hour-glasses, where are they? They were in use in every house, and some now living can remember houses where no other clocks were known, not much more than twenty years ago. Death trophies, grim and unrelenting, covering the half of almost every old stone in the place, were "the right thing," and remained in fashion up to the latter part of the eighteenth century. Then came a reaction. Cross-bones and sexton's implements were discarded first, and people began to be shy of a too crude expression of ideas about the End, and doom and inevitable decay. Then crept in words

that bore some brief touch of Hope or Resignation, and these increased in number, until now they glitter in gaudy gilt letters upon polished granite; and here too, as everywhere else, the simplicity of the little old cemetery, or "place to sleep in," is interfered with by the glare of bead flowers under glass. In these days we seem to make believe that we may pass lightly over from Passage Perilous to the Fair Havens beyond! The oldest amongst my silent friends here, or rather, their families for them, left scarce any visible sign of any spiritual hope that may have been theirs. One alone I find, where it stands apart, darkly overshadowed by the trees. It is a plain, great table-stone—older by many years than poor Mary Findlay's sepulchral masterpiece—and upon it, most clearly cut, are these few words: "Here lyes in the Hope of a Glorious Resurrection, Andrew Donald. August 1712 and of age 63 years." To him the supreme moment came, undrest of all its terror. Far away through the dark vista of a hundred and eighty years, one seems to see the man, as he lay with Heaven's light upon his brow, and in his heart the thought, "O grave, where is thy victory?" That old grey stone under

the yew-trees absolutely glows out of the gloom. And there is the sound of a word in my ear, some old saying, heard I know not where:

> "Life that shall send a challenge to the End,
> And when it comes, say, Welcome, Friend."

Not far from Andrew Donald, John Duncan "lies interred"; "who lived respected as an honest man, which is the noblest work of God." His date is 1771, and he lived sixty years. James Cantray, another of my silent friends (1789), lived once in Hog-hillock of Netherby. (The local names are quaint!) 1702 inscribed above the name could not refer to his birth, for he only lived fifty-eight years. Alexander Ethershank, "late smith in Granesacre," was a fine fellow in his day. His stone is done in first-rate style, with a carven crown of glory and a sturdy smith's hammer underneath. He left off work in August 1770, aged seventy-one. Not till seven years after was the stone set up, and then was added, "Likewise his children, Alex, Anne, Will, Mary, and William." They always lost a lot of children in those days; and young and old "departed" mostly in early spring and autumn. I am attracted to Isobel McErcher by her pretty Spanish-

sounding Christian name. It is not uncommon here, and is as musical as Hellon (for Helen) is the reverse. Another friend, James Henderson, is worthy of sincere regard and esteem. After he had prospered in life as a manufacturer in Aberdeen, he did not in his prosperity forget his old father ("a farmer in Westerton of Greenhill for upwards of forty years, who died in 1810, aged eighty"), nor his father's youngest son—the brother, who died in his youth when he was but fourteen. James erected a tall upright stone to the memory of both. Plenty of room was left for his own name, but no one took the trouble to record it. Perhaps he, too, was "the last of the family." Very seldom do uncertainties of spelling occur, common as these are in many a last-century document. On the table-stone of the Silver family, in the shadows of the east end of the church, we see that Janet Fergusson, spouse to W. Silver, "*depairted* the 13th. of March 1715 and of age thirty-three years." Poor Mr. Silver, the father, has no record at all, his own lawful half of the two tablets having been economically used up for the eldest married daughter. It is one of the little mysteries that are not rare among my friends of St. Mary's. Near the pos-

tern door, in the wall leading out upon the river bank, is another of them. Low in the ground, where the autumn leaves drift deep, overhung by long fronds of lady-fern and weighed down into the earth by its own weight, lies the heavy layer-stone I mean. It may be a fond fancy only; but always it seems to me that around it broods an air of gentle pathos. No sign of inscription or of graven picture can be made out until the thick moss that overgrows the stone is scraped aside. Then there comes to light a skilfully worked oval with date 1744, and the initials M. H. in boldly carved italics. Just below the oval is the pair of arched tablets, like Moses' Tables of the Law such as used to be in churches, for the names of husband and wife. Here, however, the space remains entirely blank and empty. Underneath, and just above the usual death-trophies, are the words, "Margaret Henderson, their only daughter. She died Sept. 17, 1743." Their only daughter! But whose? The unwritten space which should have been filled in with her parents' names was never used. Yet from its size and careful sculpture one would think this had been intended to become a family stone. Perhaps the old people went away, and the

place where they had dwelt remembered them no more. They and their sorrow were forgot. The alto relievi seem to be by the same hand that worked for Mary Findlay two years after. The sculpture of them is exceptionally fine, and there is the same squat hour-glass as in hers. The artist may have been a farmer living not very far off, one Mr. Cresswell, who is described thus in the Statistical Account, 1794: "He could not form a single letter with the pen, yet he made a few tombstones with very fine engravings upon them." (Do our Board Schools ever turn out a genius like that?) Elspit Trupp, spouse to James Collie, tenant in "Cairngressie," arrived here much later, in 1826. Elspit was a character in her day. Something of a shrew I think. One knows that instinctively. There she stands at her door in her "high-cauled cap,"[1] busily knitting and gossiping with the neighbours or ordering James Collie about. I can see her plainly! He, good man, was a douce sort. He didn't presume to outlive his wife more than four years, and his departure was of no consequence whatever. He

[1] Old Scotch nurse's song—

"Oh, that I had a little starch and blue
For my high-cauled cap, for my high-cauled cap!"

is briefly alluded to in a corner. Poor young Andrew Williamson lived in Mains of Porteachen, and it was in the middle of the merry month of May that he went away. The spring was pouring floods of green on the budding trees in woods and fields about Porteachen, and the singing of birds was heard in the land, while in his father's house all faces were darkened—for a young man lay there, dead in his prime. He has a big stone all to himself, bedecked with all and more than the accustomed memento mori.

Always the more profound the sorrow, the sterner is the expression of it in this place. The greater grief, the grimmer cross-bones. And Andrew has them displayed in all their glory! The words of the inscription run into one another, in the curious way common at that date, thus:—

HERELYESAN	SONWHOLIVED	OFPORTEACH	EDMATHE	ANDOFHIS
DREWWILLIAM	INMAINS	ENANDDEPART	14DAY1722	AGE22YEARS

One more note, and then we round the corner into the nineteenth century. There is a low stone recording the name of "Margaret Rait," spouse of a tenant in "Wester Auchlounies"; she is the only one of the name here. There's nothing in a name,

yet at times, how much! With the name, the power of association calls back as in a vision the gaunt ruin of the Castle of Rait.[1] Haunted by its terrible tradition the scene once seen long ago looms gloomily afar. The castle is founded upon a rock, yet it has not stood. Three roofless shattered walls forlornly pierced by empty windows and their broken transoms are all that remain of it; and the sky looks down upon a dismal hollow place of heaps and wildering thorns. Wintry winds moan through and through with a sound of bitter wailing. Late Autumn suns glow with lurid light upon the walls, and Summer's belated flowers bloom sweetly at their foot, between the rocks and tumbled boulders. Not alone has stress of time and tempest rent and ruined the ancient stronghold. A curse is there, that "says as plain as whisper in the ear, the place is haunted." The story of Rait Castle lives but in dim traditions of the countryside. They tell of the chief of the Cummings' fatal feast, and how his guests of the Clan Chattan were to be treacherously slaughtered. All is ready as the Mackintoshes troop up the hill. Courteously they are welcomed and the

[1] Near the town of Nairn.

banquet is begun, and loud the revelry wore on into the night. Suddenly the skirl of bagpipes shrills through the din of song and laughter resounding on the stair,—and one enters bearing a ghastly dish—a black bull's head. Then the silent toast is given, "The Memory of the Dead," and at the signal the clan rise up to draw their swords each man upon his guest at his side. But Cumming's daughter had secretly forewarned young Mackintosh, her lover; and every Mackintosh had his dirk ready, hid under his plaid. Out flashed the blades as with a yell of derision the Mackintoshes flung themselves on the traitors, and plunged their daggers into their hearts. None but the Cummings' chief escaped alive; and he, mad with rage, sprang up to the turret where his daughter had taken refuge, and as she flew to the window, trying to leap out and escape from her maddened father, with his broadsword he struck off both her hands. . . . From that night of horror, ever after Rait has been desolate. Centuries have rolled away, the cruel tragedy is forgot,—only the blood-stained ruin on the hill stands in solitary, silent witness.

Soon after the close of the eighteenth century a marked change in the storied

stones of Maryculter has begun. All superfluous *the's* and *and's* are dropped, and ere half the century ends the more homely "spouse" or "spowse" is exchanged for "wife," and the whole simplicity of wording by which we come to know what manner of men were those fine old Scotsmen in their generation, ceased for ever. Their simple directness of character may account for the well-nigh entire absence (as I said before) of all expression of religious hope. "God's Errand-Ghost," the Rider on the Pale Horse, has passed by that way, and one in the house—it may be the most loved of all,—is dead. There is no shirking of that bare truth, no attempt to soften it. The sands are run out; the hour-glass laid down on its side—the spade and shovel have to be taken up. . . . Then came tall upright stones with plain rounded tops; and while all tokens of mortality were put on one side, the future is alluded to only with dull conventionality. The inscriptions are less deeply incised upon the stone, the meaning more condensed; and whereas there had used to be no evasion of a man's calling or where he lived, whether gardener or smith, crofter or shoemaker, such minor points as these were now kept dark.

Chiefly must we regret the lost expression, common in older times, "hereunder lyeth." It is used by Tennyson—

> "Old yew whose fibres grasp the stones
> That name the underlying dead."

It would be presumption to count the Reverend Mr. Glennie in the list of my more familiar acquaintance: he is so very learned! And his epitaph, all in Latin, stretches the full length from end to end of his great plain table-stone. No such grim follies as were just then passing out of vogue disturb its dignity. It tells his virtues; and that he fell on sleep at the age of eighty-one, Dec. MDCCCI. It begins "Viro Reverendo" and it ends "Placido animum efflavit"; which sounds rather poetical. He was minister of Dalmaik (pronounced Drumoak) from thence transferred to Maryculture—so he wrote the name—where he served for thirty-nine years. In his time the ancient church of the Knights Templars was destroyed; and I fear that to him it was no great heart-break when the new kirk was set up close to his own snug manse on the hill. He wrote about his parish in those most fascinating volumes "The Statistical Account of Scotland," in 1793. There was a twinkle

of dry humour about the canny old Scotch minister that must have come out at times in his long sermons, and is not entirely absent from his statistics; as when he says the people are generally sober and industrious, "and must be œconomical as they cannot afford luxuries, &c." Yes, we seem to know the minister better than we do most of his congregation, crowding under the green grass around him. He took pride in the stature of his men parishioners, "some being six feet two inches in height," and in the long age that some attained. "A widow who died last year (1792) at the age of 102 years, and a man at the advanced age of 104." The parish kept up its reputation of longevity, for "Euphemia Arther, whose late husband was sometime farmer in Greenhead," died at 102 in 1823, while near by lies an old man of 101. The later note seems almost identical with the earlier; yet there is no mistaking the difference of dates. Curious and interesting to us in the nineteenth century are some of the items of parish history collected by the minister. Labourers were paid eightpence to tenpence a day, and statute labour was both exacted in kind and commuted for money. Some of the worst pasture let at fivepence an acre. There

were twenty-eight plough-gates of land, and the produce of the parish more than supplied the inhabitants with provisions. There was one coach, one waggon, and forty or fifty carts. The minister is very much interested in the spinning and knitting of worsted stockings, "the general employment of all females from seven years old and upwards, and the cheapest are accounted the most profitable both for workers and merchant." In 1782–3, many lived very hardly and sparingly in this parish. The kirk-sessions bought meal and pease in Aberdeen "when they could be got," and distributed. There was a decline of population, partly owing to there being no more peat for fuel. He himself, at great expense, had rendered arable ten acres of land. (Maryculter was mostly green hills in those days.) Mr. Glennie kept an academy for "young gentlemen from the Indies and America," and his brief account of Mariæ Cultura (which he states to be the original orthography) ends thus: "No turn-pikes are needed or wished for in the parish." There are no natural productions noted excepting "some small deer of the roe kind" in Kingcausie woods, no allusion to the Templars, nor the Knights of St. John, nor to any antique

traditions. The Corbie burn runs through a ravine and under the hill where the minister dwelt, tumbling headlong when in spate with far-heard uproar down into the brown seething pool of the Corbie Pot. But Mr. Glennie gives no heed to the haunting fairy of the waterfall; nor does he heed the armed knight who on stormy nights is known to gallop full speed across the glen; nor the unhappy Moorish maiden's blue jewel that sometimes glitters with a spectral light in the open field when all is dark. . . . Such trifles would ill become his academic gravity! And so we take our leave of John Glennie, Minister.

About four years before his departure, in 1777, W. Milne, in one of the only two attempts in this place at rhyme, tells that he is "from care and trouble scett free," and exhorts his friends to "mind on your sins, thinck not on me." The admonition savours a little of the familiar lines—

> "God takes the good, too good on earth to stay,
> And leaves the bad, too bad to take away."

How pleasant after this to recall the old mariner's epitaph near the sands within sound of the sea, at Foveran on the east coast, and common in nearly the same

words at many other kirk-yards by the sea—

> "Though Boreas' blasts and Neptune's waves
> Have tossed me to and fro,
> In spite of both by God's decree
> I harbour here below;
> Here at an anchor I do lie
> With many of our fleet,
> Till once again we do set sail
> Our Admiral, Christ, to meet."

Seldom now is the door of this quiet world undone to admit a new arrival, so few are the surviving families who still possess the right. A cross, almost the only one in the place, is set on the summit of the ivied reredos of a little iron-railed close, where throughout the year the turf is kept green and smooth. Sometimes, one who remembers, will come there and leave a few flowers. Hereunder rests, awaiting the resurrection of the just, Alexander Gordon, the old Laird of Ellon, once of Auchlunies. He slept in his ninetieth year, 1872. By his side lies the mother of his children with two infant daughters. Other four children of that family have since gone their way, but only their names are here. Richard, the sailor lad who was lost at the wreck of H.M.S. *Challenger* (by her ship's crew, fondly

called "The Never"). He perished in the stormy surf that raged upon the Molquilla rocks of Chili, May 1835, "having volunteered a dangerous service essential to the safety of his shipmates." The gallant boy was but nineteen. . . . Years later a soldier brother gained distinction by his calmness and courage in another wreck, where all were saved. Bertie Gordon was then a young captain in the 91st Highlanders (which he afterwards commanded), in charge of troops on board the troopship *Abercrombie Robinson.* It was in Table Bay, in that great storm which wrecked the *Birkenhead.*[1] Gordon so ordered the disembarking and his influence so told with the troops, though the most of them were but raw recruits—that at his bidding they formed in line on the opening decks, and stood silently waiting their turn till the boats had been filled and returned again and again, and every woman and child had been got safe to shore. Then the troops left, and directly after the last boat left her side she went to pieces. And all the time the emigrant ship *Waterloo* in that terrible sea was breaking up and all hands lost, almost under the very eyes of the young soldiers

[1] Feb. 25, 1852.

on the *Abercrombie Robinson*. . . . Truly there's grit in the Gordons, and it came out strong in the old laird's sons! And that little peaceful green shines with a memory of "the gallant Gordons."

The last time I visited St. Mary Virgin, moss had so thickened there, that many of the "engravings" could scarcely be made out. On one stone, once brave with angels and lilies and armorial bearings, the surface had shaled off, so that little of its sculpture was left. Another was coated deep with silvery lichen. Soon Time will have obliterated every last trace of the Invisible Host—my friends—even their very names, once carved with so much care on the old grey stones of Maryculter.

Along the Narrow Gardens:

Elrick Walks

Elrick, Field of the Fairies

IT was soon after moonrise on the eve of full moon, the 2nd of October, a year ago, when in crossing the bridge over Elrick burn there appeared to me the strangest, weirdest illumination upon the old stone parapet on either side. Opposing lights were cast from a great gold harvest moon and from the green glow of a frosty west. Neither light did seem to gain the mastery, for both alike threw shadows on the walls. On the right hand burned the moon's light, warm as the reflex of some dying conflagration, while cold and crystal-pure as beryl itself shone the western sky upon the left. Past the bridge the road lay between lines of slender ash-trees casting half-transparent shades. Did ever any one before, I wondered, walk thus between two shadows, shadowing him right and left? Better so than none, for that is no good sign. Long ago it was said, by the country-folk, of at least one

man of evil repute among lairds of his day, that "neither on moonlichty nichts nor in broad day had he ever a shadow to him."

As I stood still for a moment considering the curious effect, I thought a *third* silently, slowly went by. It might have been a mere momentary illusion, though certainly I saw a shadow pass. There was just a little shock of surprise, nothing more; for who can tell what strange things may not happen on such an evening in the North? It is likely that on no other evening, in any other month of the year, would moon and sky combine to make one feel linked with the outland race of them who, as a poet told, dwell "east of the sun and west of the moon," wherever that fair land of dreams may be.

Along these lonesome country roads, when labourers have gone home and lights begin to stream from windows on the hillsides far apart, few might be the belated wayfarers who marked the crossing shadows by the light of the harvest moon. When summer is past and happy daylight walks are done, there comes the joy of the moon, with her mysterious charm. When the Empress of the Night rules in splendour, flooding the earth with seas of silver,

and broken blots of ebon blackness, they need not be all hopeless lunatics who respond with a kind of exaltation to the strong influences of her hour. But when she floats, a crescent bark, serene in the soft atmosphere of an autumn evening, then is her sway hushed and gentle—divine with thoughts that are not of earth. Whether by sunlight or by moonshine, long hours of solitary walks inland of this north-east coast of Aberdeenshire are to be counted amongst the purest of life's common pleasures. Then is the time for dreams. Then are composed essays and poems,—every one of them perhaps to fade away, unwritten and forgot. Then are there pictures painted which never know paint or canvas. Then also is it that a subject for pen or pencil first forms itself in the mind, and in many a happy walk is pursued until "the idea shines." And when this is thus, we confess the hours not idly spent. Yet how deeply soever the mind may be at work, the eye sees and takes in with delight details of rock and grass and wild-flower, each varied outline of trees or fields, of hilltop and of cloud. Wild woods and mountains and river-sides may be more full of romantic beauty, yet, for everyday

wear, these familiar roads with their old stone dykes are best. There are the road-side flowers and herbs, changing ever with the changeful months; the purple distance of wooded heights, with the field life, and birds,—and the human interest, which last never can be least.

This Elrick countryside is very old—a truism that only means old cottages, old landmarks, old stones. There is a hilly road from which the prospect on a sunny late September morning is as beautiful as the breeze that blows over it is bright and health-giving. It is the very picture of prosperity. Amidst the upland corn and pasture are scattered clumps of trees and islands of white farmsteads. Around each farm lies its little enclosed bit of garden and a labourer's cottage or two, and the shadow of them aslant upon the hill. A black heap under every farm gable and beside every cot is the winter hoard of peat. Later in the month dark loads creep all day along the winding far-seen roads. It is the season for "leading" peats. Pasturing in the fields beside the cattle are flocks of white sea-mew. The birds rise and settle and rise again in a perpetual twinkle of white wings. The weather is so fine that "stookey Sunday" must be

near. On stookey Sunday the corn-stooks stand in ordered ranks everywhere up and down the wide deserted lands. The last of the harvest ("clyack" they still call the last sheaf sometimes) has been cut by the youngest lass in the field, and only tarries for the "leading," or carrying, as they would say in England. There is a deeper quiet in the air than even on any ordinary Sabbath day, by contrast with the busy jollity of last week's end. The very silence speaks, while the Bible word keeps running in our mind,—the word which said, "and the land had rest." The sheaves will stand as they are, all a-row up and down the fields day and night, for long. They have to await fulfilment of "the flailer's prayer"—the welcome shower that made the thrashing easy. An old rhyme formerly in use was written down nineteen years ago from the lips of an old ploughman crooning by the farm-kitchen fire—

"Trembling strae maks trottin' owsen ;[1]
Trottin' owsen maks red lan' banks ;
Red lan' banks maks a thin corn-yaird ;
A thin corn-yaird maks a hungry fairmer!"

[1] *Owsen*, oxen.

That is true Doric; but, whether in rhyme or prose, "the flailer's prayer" is now but an empty sound, for the big deafening threshing-machine needs none of it. Yet, rain or shine, the stooks will bide a wee, and hold the field. If to-day were Sabbath, the sea-birds would be away. Birds, &c., as we all know, have their own ways of spending it. On Sundays gulls are not seen inland. Rooks choose it for the first day of nest-building in the spring. Caged doves almost invariably lay an egg on Sunday. The heron alights by the burn near the house for an hour's quiet fishing while the people are at kirk. Salmon get up the river unscared by mills, and bees are said not to swarm.

The aspect of a certain quiet full prosperity, so characteristic of this part of Scotland, is no mere idle show. The black peat neatly stacked at the gable end of the poorest dwelling alone might mark the difference. New slated houses are many, but there still remain dotted about near the roads or on the hillsides old low-roofed dreary little dwellings of the poor (poor, almost without *poverty!*), the same as were in existence a hundred years ago and more. The old thatch grows deep-green crops of moss; the

wooden lum is swathed round in hay-ropes; the doorway is only just high enough, or barely, for a man to walk in without knocking his head; little deep-set windows not made to open, with one like an after-thought worked in the wall beside the ingle-neuk. Sometimes huge boulders, built in as corner-stones, give a sense of solidness and security. How well the colour-tone of roof and walls blends with the colouring of all the land around! Dreary little northland cottages! how pleasant is their look of homely comfort, how engaging their bit of bright garden, and how seldom would it gain a prize for tidiness! Sweet simple flowers, such as are sown in spring, grow there, with a patch or two of so-called English iris and blue monkshood, all blooming as they never bloom in milder regions. If a few tall splendours of crimson sword-lily perchance aspire above the humbler flowers, they are guiltless of giving a shock of incongruousness, as would a scarlet geranium or yellow calceolaria, or any other flowering foreigner. Deep-rooted in Scotland in the hearts of her people, is their love for gardens. It is a love born with their birth, and it forsakes them never. Even the children play at gardening, and make

small pleasure-plots by the road, in rough waste-grounds, or in corners of the crofts. One such miniature garden I pass in walks along the Elrick roads. It is the joint property of a family of four children. The little space is carefully fenced round, and laid out in walks and flower-beds. Two tiny wooden gates, fastened with a loop of old string, admit—or keep out—the brownies, the only people who might be supposed to wish to trespass there, or sit under the shade of a tall tree of spiced southernwood in the midst! A fairy path leads to a thicket of spotted pulmonaria; and in a sunny corner is the strawberry bed, where is room for just one large strawberry root. Sometimes I have known the children make their "brownie" gardens among the foundation-stones of some poor ruined cot; and there I have seen a fairy farmyard too, with little corn-stacks of wild grasses thatched with rush.

Bound up together with this native love for flowers and gardens is the faculty of vivid imagination. It dies down as the years increase, but in the bairnie's breast, as a rule, it glows and burns. With flame more faint, perhaps, imagination does also not seldom illuminate the daily life of cottage children in the tamer South. In

Berkshire field-paths, for instance, one may often come unawares upon little altars piled within recesses of big tree-roots, decked out in freshly gathered flower-heads. It is the children who build these high places, and make their little offerings there of red clovers or buttercups or blue veronica. A tiny survival it may be of Mariolatry, or perchance of some remote pagan age. The remnants of that ruin at the foot of the Gallow Hill (where I found the little fairy farm and flower garden) wear a dreary aspect, more desolate even than those frequent ruins of desolated homes—just two gaunt roofless gables—that are seen afar in distant fields from the windows of some passing train. There remains only a heap of big foundation-stones smothered in weeds and thistles.

Nothing certain is known about the Gallow Hill, or the meaning of its gruesome name. Straight up the steep brae leads the path to the spot where it is said the gallows stood. All who came and went through that cottage door must have seen it. From the peep-hole window by the hearth it would be for ever in sight. One can fancy how, as years went on, the little home would become distasteful to the dwellers in it, and was at last deserted

and pulled down. The hillside grass is fine and short, and thick with flowers. The track climbs through a plantation of young spruce and between the hoary boles of a few ancient beeches, and then, the summit reached, one may rest upon the heather all interwoven with blaeberry and thyme, and dream away a sunny August hour. All around, above, below, reigns profoundest silence. No living creatures can be seen save the feeding cattle and white sea-gulls down in the low-lying pasture-lands. A wide landscape fraught with the stillness of deep peace spreads away and away to the far horizon-line of lilac hills. The sun shines sweetly on near farms and woods. On such a day, it might well have been, took place the last tragedy connected with the gibbet when it stood there, reared up on the hill crest, where we now take our ease resting among the honey-scented heath-bells. From the highroad a mile away, and from every path and every house within sight, the awful Thing could be seen, silhouetted black against the sun-bright sky. The half-forgotten tales that with difficulty may be extracted still from the country-folk round about are of the vaguest. Whatever happened here must

have been at least 150 years ago. The parish archives—a part of which perished by fire—are silent upon the subject. Some say this was the place of execution for the whole of New Machar; others, that here stood the gallows-tree of the lairds of Elrick, in the ugly old times when the lairds, or barons, "had power of pit and gallows." No deep loch—like the loch of Spynie—being near at hand, the maintenance of a gallows was of course a necessary expense! "The oldest inhabitant" tells a tradition of his boyhood. Two herd-boys posted on the hill to watch the cattle (the land was not in those days enclosed) were playing together, and one hung up the other in sport upon a tree. Returning in an hour, the lad was dead as he hung. Then the boy suffered death himself on the gibbet, set up for him alone. Yet another and more ghastly tradition lingers, and would seem to point to the first idea, of a place of public execution.[1] They say that one hot summer a hundred years ago the ripened berries had to be left to hang ungathered on the bushes in cottage-gardens within

[1] This uncomfortable tradition is mistakenly attributed to Elrick Gallow Hill. I have since found it occurred in another more distant locality.

a certain distance of the Gallow Hill. Whatever may be the truth of all that is said to have happened here in those far days, time has since so wrought as to mellow into wild loveliness the once drear aspect of the hill of doom. We only know it now as a flowery brae, from whose summit is seen the prettiest home-view in all the countryside. Children love to play there; and thither will many a lover and his lass stroll out on Sunday afternoons. They never trouble about the old grim past! whilst I, who forget it never, often turn my steps that way in fond iteration. A part of the attraction simply means, it must be owned, that after a long walk southward, to return round by the Gallow Brae is usually the nearest way home.

Across the moss—rich in June and July with golden sedge and bog-buttercup, or white with downy tufts of *pussies* (cotton-grass)—the uncertain track is lost, at times a little unaccountably, in a great voiceless pine-wood. It may be found again on the margin of a little lonely loch, whence it leads back through the pines out into the cheerful roads. The Great Wood (so named by none except myself!) is not really very large, only its extent is greater than some other neighbouring

woods. The charm of it is ideal. Even in autumn it is all suffused with the fragrance of the firs. The tall trees stand apart, and give breathing-room for every kind of wood wild-flower to push up and thrive, through the brown carpet of fallen fir-needles. Patches of purple heather, with intervals of rosy ling, mix with the bright emerald of wood-sorrel. Hosts of small scabious toss light balls of lilac wool in all the more open greener spaces, above a network of creeping tormentilla. Ferns there are in profusest, daintiest variety, and half-hidden crowberry with dark polished foliage. Thinly scattered through all the outer fringes of the wood—luxuriantly crowding the deeper, cooler shades—the eye is conscious of pale-brown triplet leaves on delicate inch-long stalks. It is wintergreen (*Trientalis europæa*), pride of the northern woods. Why our English name is wintergreen were hard to tell. When in June their prime was done, the little white flowers loosed hold and fell away—not petal by petal, but whole, like scattered snow-stars. Then, along with fresh green summer, the substance of leaves and stalks decayed, until all the plant seemed dipped in a brown autumnal dye. By-and-by each sombre-coloured

triple leaf upheld a pearly seed or two. Often in warm September days has this white seed deceived unwary strangers, who, forgetting how the flowery time is long past, think to find fresh blooms upon the wintergreen. Soon these brown reliquiæ with their pearls shall perish and burn away into oblivion—little mimic flames of crimson.

Signs of some small arboreous life are not wanting in the wood. The ground is littered with short ends and tassels of fir-twigs nipt off from upper branches. Squirrels mostly are accused of the mischief (mischief far more likely to be the work of the insidious pine-beetle). A surer token of the unseen active presence somewhere of these little sportive beings is, that every red "tode-stol" has been skinned on the very first day of its appearing. In the brisk clear atmosphere of the fir-wood no such unwelcome guest as a "corpse candle," so called, will ever peer in among the throngs of fine tawny *agarics* springing up from under tawny fir-needles. These, with shy violet ones that enliven sometimes the moist dead leaves lying underneath isolated beech, seem to escape attention from the squirrels. They are never peeled as are the scarlet and orange.

Do the little rascal "shadow-tails" taste a sugary flavour in the fine colour? They hide away so cleverly that rarely does the whisk of a tail of one betray it. Later in autumn they become more fearless, and are bold enough to chatter and scold, at hide-and-seek among the branches. Then is the time to scatter nuts and almonds for them on the lawn close under our windows, and look for repayment in watching the delicious grace of their gambolling. The shadow-tails will dance about the lawn light as withered leaves—with frugal forethought, in contrast to their usual frivolity, sowing the turf with every nut they do not crack and eat. Could one but be a St. Francis and attain the gift of charming wild creatures of the woods! There are those at whose call a squirrel will climb down from some high branch and take a nut from the hand, or perch inconveniently on the book in their lap if they happen to be reading under a tree. There is a lady I know, one who draws to her all living creatures. She was visited last week by a fine hedgehog, on the morning of her eighty-fifth birthday. When she opened the garden door, there sat piggy waiting on the door-mat. He was regaled with milk, and next morning came again

for more, bringing a pair of young ones with him. Such examples, however, of the power we covet are rare. Whilst at play with the shadow-tails, dare it be whispered how the only bit of a sermon I ever remembered much of afterwards, occurred in one (preached by the Bishop of Oxford) at the service of completion of a village church-tower in Bucks. Referring to the old towers as land-marks, the sermon went on to describe that particular district of Mercia, as it was in the olden days. "For forty miles in a straight line," the Bishop said, "a squirrel might leap from tree to tree." A suggestive enough sketch this of the country Milton knew and loved, with its small old villages set in the midst of forest-land.

Other, lesser forms of life abound in late summer days in this woody wild. There is a curious semblance of a transmigration into winged life in the hosts of new-born, yellowish, filmy moths fluttering just above the yellow withered grasses! They have just escaped from silky cells where in their chrysalis state they lie; and until they rise and fly, one would scarce guess the existence of these living leaves, these faded moths, so exactly are moth and dry grass, matched in colour to a shade.

Should the spinning of cocoons not yet have begun, and the hour for retirement from the world not come, the eye may chance upon some lovely caterpillar fattening on the heather. Nature truly gives rein to fancy of a marvellous order in her decorations of some of these amongst the lowliest of her creatures. Nature's consummate taste and infinite variety are here displayed in endless combinations of both form and tint. A favourite type—one sees it everywhere—is done with ornamental side-stripes of electric blue and black velvet cross-bands, set off with a head-decoration of black peacock's crests and tufts of spun silver all along the back. Not one in ten thousand of these art masterpieces in miniature is like to be seen of men. But to the serene grandeur of the mind of Nature, what matters? The heather in the shaded woods is not broad or deep enough to sustain with safety a caterpillar so grand as one we once met on a grouse-moor over the hill, within sight of the sea. The girth of it was huge, and in length it measured nigh four inches. The green of it matched the heather leaf on which it fed, and it bore on each segment tiny raised rosettes in pink, set on rings of black velvet, closely

imitating the pink heath-buds. The copy was so true that living creature and flowering spray were one in appearance. This black velvet, so much used for insect patterns of all varieties, may possibly be meant to represent an effect of shadow or of empty space, behind or under the mimicry in the pattern, whatever it may be. Another beauty, a good-sized hairy caterpillar, who has a habit of crossing your path, is clothed in sleek chestnut fur, with the customary trimmings of black velvet. He is a fine fellow in his way, feeding on and on till the end of autumn; so the warm fur coat must be comfortable. There are no bright pigments in reserve for the painting of the imago's wings, at least of these species. When the perfect moth comes forth it is dark night. In the dark they take their pleasure, and dark colours suit well the brown heathlands where they play.

On dry autumnal afternoons, though sundown be near at hand, there seems no need to hurry homeward. It is so sweet to sit down a while, cushioned among blaeberry and ferns, and let Time's steps steal past uncounted! The stillness is profound—like the still silence in a dream; for now the "squirrel's granary is full, and

no birds sing." Between the red pine-stems a level ray strikes along the glistening pathway netted over with gossamer, weaving a silvery weft which stretches endlessly afar, till lost at last in the golden sun-mist. The way home takes us by the edges of the little loch. Since this time last year how spoilt it is! The great December gale flung down its tallest pines along the right bank. Down into the water they fell, and there ever after they are likely to lie neglected and decaying—for it is worth no one's while to remove them. All the repose of the tiny lakelet with its clear reflections has vanished. The pretty water-looking-glass is shattered, without a hope of mending. Earlier in the summer we might have forgotten all this ruin, in the pleasure of watching the dragon-flies on the reedy margin. Strong, swift, hungry hunters! arrayed in lucid tinsel, coursing up and down in the glory of the latest sun-glance. Myriads of ephemeræ there are, in the plenitude of their monotonous enjoyment. There is a kind of pathos about them as they rise and fall by the million in rhythmic dance above the water, to the tune of "a short life and a merry one!" Two hours is the longest allotted to any one of them—cut

short to a few minutes by many a greedy trout. This is how an observant parish minister describes ephemeræ, in a county history of the last century (it may be concluded they are the creatures alluded to): "About sunset the loch is infested by flies of the gnat kind, which fasten in great numbers on every part of the fisher's clothes, and, leaving their skins, fly off sportive as from a prison. The incumbent has often returned home covered with their *spolia opima.*" Flies of the gnat kind, and others, are but a by-interest. It is the spoilt loch that for the moment fills the thoughts with unavailing regrets. Happily the wood itself was not laid waste by that outrageous gale in 1894. Folk talked of the "blind fury" of it. It might be more graphically true to affirm that the storm fiend that luckless day deliberately picked out for ruin the loftiest old trees, the finest woods, the shelter that could least be spared, the choicest and healthiest plantations throughout the land. And then woods even of the grandest were overthrown, without Salvator-like picturesqueness. Fifty broad acres on one estate have been seen prostrate; yet the effect is not fine. The trees fell all one way as the wind blew,

and lay along the ground in rows. But for the uptorn roots it might have been the work of the estate woodman. In wooded spaces of less extent the effect is often less formal, the timber more tossed about and broken up, as though the trees had made in vain a brave stand against the wind.

Meanwhile, with a quiet persistence, Nature repairs herself. I have seen an unthinned plantation, the firs standing so thick that for years sunlight had never penetrated the gloom. During a storm down they crashed, and a broad way through was cleared. The wood was ruined. But in less than six months after, a faint film of green had overspread the bare ground; and wood-sorrel and foxglove and vigorous stinging nettles, with seedling sycamore and chestnut and green things whose existence was unguessed, came up from the earth, obedient to the law of sunshine. The reproach of barren gloom was lifted, and the whole place smiled in living green. In the pleasaunce of an old house[1] near the river Dee, no repair like this seems possible. In the middle of a beech-grove, one giant tree made as fine a picture as heart of

[1] Culter House.

landscape-painter could desire. For generations the group of trees had stood on guard, overshadowing "The Bride's Well"; a shallow pool of clear translucent water, where, tradition tells, a bride who had fled from the house on her bridal night was drowned. None now can say what might have been the forgotten tragedy that drove her to despair. Only the bare fact has come down to us. The old ground-officer, when questioned, will half-angered repeat: "It was juist a bride, an' she drooned hersel' as brides wull," as if quite a usual thing to occur! That fatal winter, when the blast of the Terrible One rushed past, not all the magnificent girth and strength of the great beech availed to save him. In one moment he and his brothers fell, and the dark pool lay bare to winds and weather. Not always indeed by any means are Nature's laws kind to man. The great tract of wood a few miles off, where upwards of a hundred thousand Scotch fir and spruce went down, felled by the stormy power of the wind, knows since another power, in its way as great —the resistless might of the infinitely little. The tiny pine-beetle, always at work more or less undermining the bark, found his labour made easier by the prone condition

of the timber. So they increased enormously, until their multitudes, becoming tired of the fallen logs, unscrupulously transferred themselves to the healthy trees that remained upright. Under the beetles' persistent onslaught these soon grew to be diseased and useless. There seems no way of getting rid of the plague, except to burn up the whole wood. Meanwhile, the little *curculii* go on prospering and multiplying to their hearts' content.

And now the little spoilt loch is left behind, and we are on the road once more. Long ago—yet well within memory—a certain fairy ointment, the recipe whereof is lost, used to be rubbed over the eyes of children as they slept.

I myself remember, when a child, lying awake in the long northern summer twilight listening to the nurses gossiping together in the nursery. Talking of their former places one said to the other, "Mr. Wilson came up ilka nicht while the bairns were sleepin', to rub ointment on their een to mak' them see the fairies"! Something of the kind is wanted now to enable many of us to see and enjoy in our walks things whose chiefest charm lies not in size or rarity. There are wild gardens at our gates that for the many simply do not

exist. No one takes a walk purposely to see and enjoy them; yet there they are, ever at hand, ever ready to enchant the eye that sees. These narrow gardens need no care—indeed, care would destroy them. The gardener is never seen to sow a single seed there, though one sees a thousand unpaid labourers at work in them all summer, till frost sets in and snow hides them. The birds of the air know well their labour rights! The gardens that lie on the edges of the roads between two stone dykes are fascinating indeed! The farther north one travels, the richer and more varied is the flowery edging. The sight of these flowers in their brief bright season of delight is joyful enough to beguile the longest walks. Miles of road are never wearisome, even on that almost treeless north-east coast, with such an accompaniment of blooming flower-borders. Endless are the varieties of vetches. One —*Vicia cracca*—is the commonest of all, covered with lilac clusters. I have seen a long quarter of a mile of beech hedge on the Peterhead road literally netted over with lilac vetch. One would toil on a long way, to feast the eye on such wealth of ethereal loveliness. A botanist, however, would not look twice at my wayside

gardens, for they contain, as a rule, nothing scarce or curious. They are charmful solely because of the silent jubilation, as it were, of these crowded flowers and green leafage of them down there at your feet as you pass. The magic of them is their boundless variety—not of species, but of individual growth and manner. It is the *gaudium* of them. Most joyful gauds indeed, with their fresh yellows and pure whites, their blues and their purples! All seem to be there at the same moment; nevertheless, week by week, one after another, each separate beauty takes the lead. Deep beds of Galium, yellow or white (ladies' bedstraw), give place to starry tracts of the little stitchwort, luxuriant yellow balls of giant bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), and spotted persicaria, delicately pink. Here and there, where green rushes betray some under-thread of a little roadside runnel, is pale forget-me-not, or a large-flowered yellow and brown-speckled mimulus, standing erect, looking what it is—a wanderer from the garden.[1] Ragged-robin and rosy statice, and a hundred others, with ladies' mantle (*Alchemilla*), and too

[1] Now entirely naturalised as a wild-flower, it forgets it was ever otherwise!

many far for naming, add variety and colour. Latest of all comes little quaint Euphrasia. And then, lasting long into the bad weather, there is sometimes seen the exquisite *Galeopsis tetrahit* (it bears no plain English name that I know). This belongs to the turnip-field over the dyke—chancing now and again with the others in the road. It is like a glorified "archangel" or dead-nettle. But if an angel, then did its flower-change surprise it suddenly, while yet the iris-light of Paradise had not faded from its wings. A freak of fancy! must be tolerated, with the wonder of this small field-flower under our very eyes. The colours are a lovely blending of primrose yellow with tenderest lilac. One other bright gem must not be unmentioned. Scotland's beloved little wild heart's-ease grows everywhere, haunting the dullest roadside, the stoniest, most barren spots. The velvet glow of its purple seldom dies away until extinguished in the snow. Autumn may come in with cold or wet, and go out in sleet or snow; the little flower that rejoiced us, freely blossoming all summer long, allures us still with its brilliant beauty. There is always just one more flower to be seen—and one more still, as a surprise when all

seems over and done; and then the very last is gone—and then comes yet another! and so on into dead winter. As summer slowly dies, the shining bloom of the roadside insensibly tones down into seeding. Black vetch-pods begin to cluster in the tangle, overtopped by spikes of red-brown sorrel. Carlododdies'[1] stamened powdery heads are no more,—they ceased their play ere August waned,—and richly scented white clover disappears at last. But although we cannot ourselves tire of wild-flowers, and yet to talk of them too long is tedious, one word must be said for the loveliest of all. For what would our "narrow gardens" be without their bluebells? "The bluebells of Scotland" naturally know their place, and here are their clans assembled wheresoever there is foothold in crannies of the stony dykes. Or, their airy bells wave suspended on delicate stalks all through and through the grassy banks where the road dips down between, and Elrick Burn flows across under the bridge. There are bluebells of every shade of that wan greyish love-tint we call blue. Now and then, to our joy comes one, pure white, ineffable in its perfect purity.

The wild birds delight in these old

[1] *Plantago lanceolata.*

stone walls or dykes, where no cover exists to screen them. They seem to be for ever hopping up on to the topmost stones of them, and darting across or dropping down into the field before one can get near enough to see them close. Especially tantalising in this way is the fieldfare, or "Hieland pyat," as it is popularly known in Aberdeenshire. A pair of them will pretend to be quite familiar—will perch just a step or two in advance, and then fly off, perching again a bit farther on. And this little game will be kept up till at last off they go, flying far afield. All the time one has been vainly longing for a good look at their handsome plumage. Chaffinches number most, of all the small common birds. They are everywhere. Easier to tame than sparrows, and without question more delightful, they flit close round one's feet, learn to fly in at the window for food, or follow one about the garden in their pretty confidence. As winter draws near they gather into families, and are seen in lonely places, a few together in the trees. Poor little chaffinches! may they have a good time wherever they betake themselves, and no cares to damp their saucy, brisk *insouciance*. Yellowhammers, who look at one a moment and

are gone, are but few hereabouts, and are lustrous as gold in the sunshine. Fewer still are there of that slender, gracefullest of birds, the yellow wagtail. Rarely are they met by burn or road. Yet they are tame enough to run up and down all day long on the roof of a house, or peeping in at the windows. Out in the stubble is a great blackness of rooks. Thousands are feeding, with one or two black awkward fellows sitting on a fence as sentries. Country-folk have a way of foretelling the weather by the rooks' movements. What the secret of it may be I know not. Half the world knows no more about their neighbours the rooks, than the old Scotch farmer, who, on the occasion of a village meeting, when the lecturer proposed to read a paper about rooks, remarked, "What can he have to say aboot the craw? It's juist a bird that eats 'taties." Nevertheless, both wise and wonderful are the ways of the "craw."

It is at dusk of an October evening that the "tuwhit storm" descends upon the land, settling down on some big field that is in grass or stubble. Then the ground is grey with an innumerable multitude of peewits, or plovers. With them comes a

mixed lot of starlings or of smaller birds. It is the eve of migration, and the plovers move jerkily about, and are very silent. It is an excited crowd however, incessantly in motion. When the plovers rise, the noise of their wings is as the sound of many waters. They need hardly make such a fuss though, for they do not mean to cross the sea. It is only a short trip into Berwickshire that they propose. But what of those other birds who boldly dare the seas? How many, or how few, will land safe on the other side? There is a remarkable description printed somewhere, of night-watchers in a lighthouse seeing the white breasts of hundreds of birds beating like a snowstorm against the windows of the lantern, and of how the morning light showed rock and sea around strewn thick with their dead. The passionate impulse that urges a migratory bird, has been known to impel one that is caged to dash itself against the bars so soon as the fateful hour has struck. The subject has deeply engaged many minds. It does so still, and it remains one of the profoundest of Nature's mysteries.

Round by Moneykebbock (corrupted from the ancient name Mony Cabbuck,

or Many Roebucks), past "the highlands of St. Machar," or New Machar, is to my thinking a pleasant tramp—all the pleasanter because unknown to any tourist's guide-book! Bushes of wild rose (we have none too many here), with broom and gorse and bracken, border all the way up to the heathery fallows or highlands. A steep line of road rises through land broken with wood and corn and turnips, passing within sight of an old walled graveyard—the church was moved up to the village a long time ago—in the middle of a field, by the farm of Chapel of Elrick. No path leads up to it; it stands like an island in the fields, overgrown with sycamore and wych-elm. One can enter by the small unlocked iron gate, and give a passing glance within to the long melancholy grass that hides a few forgotten names. When the trees are bare, a grey and ghostly tomb surrounded with rusty iron rails, in the centre of the enclosure, is visible from the road, above the wall. In gusty winter nights the glint of a light has been seen to rest upon this central stone. It is only when a wild west wind sweeps the country; and then, they say, the flame burns steady, unflickering. Half a mile up, towards the heathy wild,

the road passes by a long low cottage of the familiar bygone type, with wide chimney and wooden lum. A wilderness of weeds and flowers slopes down from the door. If we make our way through the tangle, and knock and enter the little dark house-place, we shall most likely find its mistress, a bent old woman, sitting idly by her dull peat fire. The place is all smoke-embrowned, from the open chimney to the settle under the window-ledge, and shelves with the dusty row of discoloured old willow-pattern plates and little jugs and bowls. The dark cavernous box-bed in the wall is brown, and very brown the big worn Bible resting on the little brown table. The very shadows are brown. The framed photograph of a brand-new Aberdeen steamer strikes the sole false note in the Rembrandt-like effect of the whole. The woman is too old and feeble to work any longer in the flower-tangle at her door. Half unwilling, she will perhaps speak of her youngest boy who died so long ago, and tell how he had cared for that little bit of garden; how he planted every plant in it, and how for his sake she loved every one of them—the orange lilies and tall white Canterbury bells, the

polyanthus and candytuft, columbine and snow-in-summer; and above all the blue cornflowers, which have bloomed and seeded and bloomed again for many a year, never letting go their hold of the soil. How azure blue are these cornflowers! She don't mind if I gather one on taking leave. Could we but more easily get at them, how often in the life-story of cotters whose doors we pass by unthinking,—might be found pathos as deep as any in printed books! Sometimes we come to know something of it when for a moment the veil drifts aside.

After this the road goes on past "the most beautiful tree in all the world"! So says the eye, each time I look upon that tree. It is a willow—grand, immense, in both bulk and height. It is mirrored in the glassy farm-pond near, where cattle cool their feet and drink, and shelter beneath the shadow of it when the sun is hot. Walk past a little way, then turn and look back, and gaze upon the tree rising up into the blue, in the glory of its countless silver! The grey of it is like an olive grove on the hill-slopes of Esterel. The shimmering leaves as the light breeze lifts them are like the silvery turn of olive sprays when the south wind

blows. One longs to sit down before the tree with an easel and a big canvas. Most hopeless of tasks! Words cannot paint the rhythm of its triad foliage; no painter's brush could give the glimmering grey of it. Walking backwards is sorry work; so the many-yeared willow must be left behind as we walk on, the charm of its wandering sheen exchanged for richer green of woodland beech. It is in this direction that our old friend, the man with the little yellow dog, may oftenest be met. Robb is the man's name, and Jamie is the other's. The man breaks stone for the roads, while the dog lies on his coat, guarding it. This man went beyond seas, and stayed abroad twelve years, and sore misliked the climate. Then the homing-hunger set in and prevailed, and back he came. There is no earning so much in a week here as he earned in a day out there. But what of that? It is bonnie Scotland, and it is Home! The man's companion is the exact copy of a tiny yellow fox—sharp-pointed ears, brush, and all; and it is a pattern of faithful endurance. One day Robb was summoned in haste to a funeral at a distance. He left work and was off at once, forgetting Jamie, who lay guarding his red necktie in a

neighbouring shallow sand-pit. After two nights' and two days' absence the man got home from the funeral, but no little dog met him at the door. For the first time he remembered he had never called Jamie to follow, that day, as he left work. Robb started for the sand-pit; and when the place was reached late in the afternoon, there lay the little yellow dog upon the handkerchief, still faithfully on guard. They believe he had never moved; and, dog-like, he bore no grudge.

"A country enclosed with stone walls" might in a way describe this part of Aberdeenshire, but it would convey no accurate idea of the picturesque old fences. The stones of them, laboriously gathered, as the land became cultivated, from surrounding waste or muir land, are rounded like boulders—relics of the age when glaciers slided over all this region, bringing down from the mountains moraine and river-rounded stones. Wherever the largest of them are hewn or blasted, they sparkle in the sun, with mica. These dykes were built up long ago—many of them so far back that moss, green as a tourmaline, girds them in thick velvety swathing; or lead-coloured lichens roughen the surface. Long lengths of wall are often dappled

with gold-dust of that slowest yellow lichen which has been said to take a hundred years of growth before its increase shows. Delicately fronded ferns peep from holes and crannies, or vagrant crane's-bill or aromatic thyme smile out from between the boulders; and the *styme* or turf, lying deep upon the upper parts, is often rich with all kinds of flowerets and fern. Dear to the secret heart of true sons and daughters of the North are these old dykes of Scotland.

A grey moraine lying desolately amid ferns and moss, where for centuries the stones have lain on a fir-grown brae, gives the passer-by strange thoughts of other times when the world was young—before the old road that cuts straight through was thought of. Sometimes, here and there, one comes across some huge block of granite built up in a fence—mute witness that somewhere not far off existed once a stone circle. In the midst of open fields, where a wide horizon extends all round, these ancients were not in former days uncommon. Latterly the few that still remain have been in a great degree protected. But it is not so very long since, that if the great stones interfered with the plough, they were recklessly broken up and used

for the *bigging* of new farm-houses or for gate-posts; or one would be left standing, for the cattle to rub against. Some way off there is a place marked on the county map "Standing Stones," and once we journeyed there, hoping to find at least some signs of a circle. Alas! the name is all that remains, with a few big stones built into the walls of a most modern farm-house, and a pair of them set up at the farmyard gate. Miles away in another direction, on a high hill-moss above the wild east coast, other stones of antiquity, I suppose as great as these, are found. There was a length of dyke built chiefly of round grindstones and rounded pudding-like anvil-stones (great pebbles of quartzite with picked hollows), which were used in the manufacture of flint arrow and spear heads, and knives, &c. The heathy, sandy ground was thickly strewn with chips and fragments of spoilt missiles. The strange thing is, that not a flint exists naturally anywhere near this ancient flint factory. Once I came suddenly upon an arrow-head or elf-shot lying on the edge of a turnip-field near a plantation of ilex-oak. It was curiously fashioned, like the pointed leaf of an ilex, and hardly distinguishable from the brown ilex leaves around it. These

elf-shots, when one has the luck to find them, are sure to have just been shot; they never lie long, or such is the universal belief among the country-folk. A tale is told of a lady and gentleman on horseback quietly riding along a country road, when the lady's hand unwittingly closed on an elf-shot that instant lodged in the folds of her habit. In Scotland any weird may be believed; nothing there, is too strange to be true. It is the land of mystery.

The "sculptured stones" exist still in great numbers. Too mystic and awe-inspiring for love, they are venerated by the initiated. Two of these have remained unheeded age after age, within the low-walled graveyard of a roofless church some distance south of Elrick woods. After crossing "the crooked Don," and climbing a steep rough bank on the other side, the ruined church is reached. It was, but a few years since, the parish church. The ancient font, long cast out, still lies half-smothered in rough grass and weeds among the graves. If one climbed on to an old sepulchre under a window, one might peer through the small greenish pane and mark how a long green ivy streamer had pushed through the roof

and waved just over the pulpit, and how cobwebs hung round the decayed unpainted pews. One glance would be enough at such a dull uncanny-looking place! Now, the old roof has fallen in, and nettle-beds fill up where pews and pulpit stood, and a brand-new kirk, with solid roof and no ivy, has arisen near. The two sculptured stones of the outside wall have, however, been promoted to within the blocked west doorway. From the recess loom the well-known enigmatic figures—strange outlines, sharp and distinct as if graven yesterday. There are the *harpoons* and *spectacles;* and the great Beast with trunk curled over his back. It appears over and over again on these stones, and is by common consent an elephant. They say the figure might have been evolved from descriptions of the elephant learned from travellers who returned from the Far East. It is the same as found on carven stones at this day in India. Many are the speculations of the learned. As one of the unlearned, I too have my theory; which shall not be spoken.

The lost key to all these hieroglyphs has been discovered by none. And all the time, with slow sure pace, farther and farther away the centuries travel on; and

ever more and more remote, more faint and small, shines apart the old, old Past. Even as year by year the hundredth part of a few grains of surface may be weather-bitten from the stone, so slow yet certain is the ultimate effacement of these undeciphered signs. The Maiden Stone of Bennachie (beyond the limits of a walk from St. Machar) bears sculptured signs, some of which are the very same in character as those in the ruined doorway. Ten feet tall, gaunt and grey, stands the Maiden in the field above the fell-dyke, close to the public road that passes on round by the foot of Bennachie. Ages of storm and tempest has she endured—alone, unshaken. Generations of men, in long and vast procession, have been born, and lived, and perished, while she has stood there, where first they set her, on the dreary muirland. Infinite toil must it have cost to cut the enormous monolith out of the quarry and bring it down the mountain-side; infinite care and skilled art in that rude age to work, in such bold yet finished relief, the hard uncompromising granite—it is coarse red-toned granite of Bennachie—and make it tell the story that all the coming races of the earth were to understand and know. The granite and its sculptured story were

to last for ever. And now, poor stone! all outworn and crumbling, only when the sun shines full upon you an hour after noonday, late in summer, can your carved images be made out at all with clearness, and then only by the transparent lilac shadows of them. The elephant is there, and the harpoon or scales; there is a mirror and a comb, and over them the ass-centaur is represented with action true to nature and full of spirit. What avails the labour and the skill, since now the whole is empty of meaning? A large notch in the upper part remains in proof of the legend which tells how the Fiend pursued the Maid of Drumdurno farm as she fled towards Pittodrie woods, and clutched her shoulder, when on the instant she was turned to stone. Men of science travel long distances to see the strange thing. Tourists hire carriages and come out from Aberdeen and picnic under its shadow. The dyke has to be scaled; and while they walk round and scrutinise, and are none the wiser, the driver, in the roadway, nods asleep on his box. And then they sit down and eat their sandwiches, and the young colts in the field come round and sniff and have to be scared away. One visitor may pluck a tiny heart's-ease from

a bevy of them growing there, and then the carriage-load drives off. They have seen the sight, they have lunched, and are content. Twenty or more years ago the moss had not been ploughed up, nor the new road made, and the stone was still knee-deep in heather. Yet even now, alone in a field hemmed in with common life—stared at, desecrated, the impression made by a first sight of that great melancholy stone is one not to be forgotten. A hundred wheels might rattle past, noisy crowds might surround it, but the Maiden Stone of Bennachie would seem to stand for ever as it now is standing—rooted in solitude, wrapt round with silence.

Once, and once only—it was after one of those picnics—the silence spoke, and said for the speechless maid:

"Oh gentle lady of noble race
With earnest eyes and stately grace,
Why have you come to-day to trace
The mystic lines of my stony face?
Dare I but speak I could tell to *you*
My strange wild tale in its aspect true,
And why I am standing still and lone
With my secret shut in my heart of stone.
For the stars that met in your horoscope,
With their gifts of dread, and their gifts of hope
Gave you, life's value to enhance,
Your soul of poetry and romance.

The flowers' secrets are all your own,
Then why not that of the Maiden Stone?
But no, my time is not yet fulfilled,
I can but whisper—'My heart is stilled,
My secret silent within my breast.'
Think of me as I am here to-day,
The sunshine gilding my robe of grey;
The soft wind near me with kisses sweet,
And heartsease blossoming round my feet."

RENA.

September 24, 1895.

Far, far have we wandered from the sweet home-walks of Elrick! and in memory alone their charm may be retraced. Could I but answer when the spirit calls, how would its flowery lanes and footpaths bear again the print of eager feet! how would the dreams once more thicken amongst the green beech leaves and amid the darkness of the firs, or glow within the fire of sunset clouds! how would the ear hear with delight the low song of the ouzel —half outsung by the bubbling burn around him—or hearken the harsh cry of some grey sea-gull overhead gravely winging to the sea! Recalling in the fogs of London lost joys of sun-bright summers, one forgets that winter reigns supreme, and that the Field of the Fairies lies flowerless and drear, hid beneath the soft white winter snow-sheet.

Autumn Sessions in a Buchan Garden:

The Garden of Ellon Castle

By the Tower of Ardgith
(*Windy Hill*)

UNDER the yew hedge that skirts a broad turf walk there lay something white. Jock — the prize Scotch terrier — spied it first and pulled it out. There it lay at my feet in the sparkle of sunshine and dew— the dried-up, shrunken body of a poor little "Narraway wifie," so called by the North countryfolk. It might have been taken for an ouzel but for the delicately webbed feet. In the fierce gales of last winter hundreds of these little auks were driven across the sea from Norway to the Scottish shores, and far inland. They were picked up dead in gardens and fields and on the hillsides. Sometimes they were found alive, but only to survive a day or two. I was told of one that they lifted out of the snow, and fed and cared for, for just one day. On the second day the "wifie" died; and her mate, who must have arrived in the night, was found dead beside her cage.

In these Norland garden grounds, little details of wild nature occur which to a naturalist are full of interest. Odds and ends occasionally come to light; traces of the small histories and romances that silently run their course, hidden away among the trees and the leaves and roots and stones. It bears no special relation to autumn gardens, and it is an old story now (for it happened fully a week ago!). But it happened here, and I still recall sadly sometimes, the episode of the last end of the kestrel who had lived here in peace, haunting the old tower, for the past two years. On summer Sunday afternoons she would perch on the highest branch of a tall fir-tree below the terrace, surveying thence all that went on. One evening something was amiss. The bird flew low, settling near us on the grass, then heavily mounting to her roost on the tower, whence she would watch us for a time, and then fly down again. It was surmised that she had killed and eaten a lost caged dove, and she was sentenced to be shot to-morrow. But "to-morrow" we found the kestrel half-dying in the strawberry beds, and soon she ceased to breathe, and we laid her on the grass for dead. There she remained, dead, till evening.

Then I took up the poor bird, stretched her long wings, and smoothed her ruffled plumage. Suddenly, the great beautiful eyes opened wide—gazing full upon me! The soul of the kestrel yet lived, though its body was dead. In a quiet nook hard by release soon came. *Utter starvation* was ascertained to be the cause of death. Could we but have known![1] In these early September days autumn approaches step by step, and we feel that now she is near at hand. Blue-bells have almost all faded from grassy banks and roadsides. The limes are yellowing too soon, for their blossoming was late, and they have yet scarce lost their fragrance. The sycamores overhanging the garden wall are embrowned already, reminding one of the chestnut groves of a Titian background. By-and-by, the sycamore leaves will shrivel off, spotted and un-reddened, and lie on the ground in unsightly heaps. Small reminiscences of their golden showers of May return to the still green laburnums in scattered points of yellow; but the gardens of Scotland have only now attained their zenith; and it is of Scotch gardens only, and the glory of them, that I can

[1] The summer had been very dry, and the supply of insects and mice on which alone the kestrel feeds had failed.

write, since for years past I have not known an English autumnal season. Far down below the window where I sit lies a garden which, in its way, is perhaps unique. An old tower and weed-grown ivied ruins command a wide green terrace, nearly the eighth of a mile in length, built on the rock. The terrace is brilliant at this time with clumps and long borders within box-edgings, of varied tints of scarlet and orange and blue. At the eastern end stands the modern castle; and away in the distant west rises the lovely peak of Ben-nachie—ever fair and never the same—whether robed in lilac mists, or deep violet-purple against the amber sunset: or in winter, wearing his white night-cap. Just in front of the tower there was once a garden pavilion of the old French style in vogue two hundred years ago. A flight of stone stairs led down through the pavilion into the yew-garden. The upper pavilion room, or parlour, has long since disappeared, and the stairs are now outside, overhung with ivy and wild wreaths of trumpet honeysuckle. The yew-garden is enclosed within grey granite walls of immense size and thickness. In the midst, upon about one acre or so of lawn, stand the grand old yews, as for centuries they

have stood. Fourteen in number, there they still remain, despite time and climate, which have dealt sorely with them, and have broken here and there their ordered ranks. These yew-trees are of great size, and their branches of enormous spread. Though a few are scarred and bare, yet they carry well their dark green burthen of, may be, six hundred years, so far as can be guessed. There once were two narrow avenues of limes flanking the yews on either hand. But these were felled a score of years ago, and only the memory of them is left. Well did we know the use of these green aisles for solitude and meditation, when we were fain to say—

> "'Friends and companions get you gone,
> 'Tis my desire to be alone. . . .
> . . . . . .
> No gem, no treasure, like to this.'
> With pleasing thoughts the time beguile
> Unheard, unsought for, or unseen,
> A thousand pleasures do me bless
> And crown my soul with happiness."

Or for long quiet talks with one or two—pacing up and down in the cool sweet shade, long ago, in the days that are no more. The lost lime-alleys have their regrets, as also has the tall gean-tree or wild cherry. It was but a poor-looking

tree all summer; but in autumn how it flamed out into crimson and gold! In an open space in the centre of the garden is the fine old sun-dial of James the Second's time, which, with its three lichen-mottled steps, its dials, and its sculptured column, is supposed to have been brought hither from sunny France. The eight-sided top, or head, is so managed, with twenty-four little gnomons in twenty-four circular recesses,—as to show the hour in every quarter of the globe! The fountain, too—picturesque with reeds and water-lilies—scatters its glitter of diamond drops in the gloom of the yew-trees' shade. Here also stood, under the broad shadow of a yew, a green seat. I know that it had been there a hundred years or more; for in the Castle drawing-room hangs a crayon portrait, of the date 1783, of a lady dressed in soft white India muslin, with powdered hair. She leans her hand, holding a blue glove, on the back of that same green garden-seat. I believe it had never received even a new coat of paint since those days! Yet in 1888 it still remained staunch and whole.

"... Oh, world's inconstancie!
That which is firm doth flit and fall away
And that is flitting doth abide and stay!"

The Garden of Ellon Castle

Under the yews how easily can one dream away a summer's afternoon. Scarce any sound from the outer world comes near. There is the plash of the little fountain, but no song of summer birds or bees. The blackbirds and thrushes are employed in sucking dry the last berries on the gooseberry-bushes, careless of entangling nets. Yellow-hammers flit from tree to tree, or a robin lights down silently, with curious eye-glance, from a branch; or a late brood of grey wagtails chase the flies with merry little runs upon the fountain's edge. We never see here the pied-wagtail, which, like a twinkle of black and silver, is so familiar an enrichment of our English lawns. A sea-gull, one of three flying seawards overhead, drops a grey feather which floats down and rests among the shadows; or the soft furry wing-feather of a tawny owl lying on the moss tells tales of wild night-life in this old shadowy spot. Perchance a white-gleaming mushroom, just on the margin of the lawn, tempts one irresistibly to pluck it, not without misgivings concerning the possibly deadly nature of yew-grown mushrooms. One morning, in October, will suddenly spring up where the shade is deepest some magnificent toad-stool, dyed scarlet, and

pearled all over. In the clear lingering light of long June evenings, in other days when the dinner-hour was so much earlier and evenings longer, we used to sit among the yews till Curfew tolled at nine o'clock from the old kirk belfry. The Curfew bell is still rung in the village below the Castle hill, notwithstanding railway and telegraph and manufactory chimneys; but now it tolls at eight, and it is for the shops to shut. Old customs die hard; and yet how many other things are too soon forgotten! After the lapse of scarce forty years the very site of some well-known house, for instance, will come to be disputed. It is thus with the old feu-house in the village, where Bishop Skinner's father composed the celebrated *Reel of Tullochgorum*, and which was pulled down less than forty years ago, and which has just been assigned a totally new site. From charters and old records the strongest reasons exist for believing that, although the yews are much older, the garden and the place were made by Thomas Chrystall, Abbot of Kinloss, and that he built here a great hall and a "tour fortalice." These Churchmen knew well—none better—how to choose their abode! Ythan, famed for trout and salmon, flows not many roods

from the garden. The position of the garden is so protected that in former days peaches ripened on the walls. Since direct proof is wanting that the Abbot Chrystall made the place, learned dissertations have been printed, and hot discussions held, to prove that he did not. And the stones of the ruin,—who know,—are dumb, and the ancient trees keep silence. . . . There is shelter in the thick belts of plantation without the walls; their leaves are mellowing now, prophetic of the autumn; but beyond stretches far and near a wide treeless waste of rich corn and pasture lands. Old grey dykes scarce break the violence of winter storms that ravage and lay low the woods, and of winds that flush the cottage children's cheeks with red. The saying of the countryside, "No need to thin the trees now the Great Forester has come," has all the truth and poetry of folk-lore. With summer, and in these first September days, soft winds, breathing balm of untold sweetness, blow upon us straight from the German Ocean. The coast is so nigh that, after a storm, from the high terrace walk we hear the sound of the troubled sea—a surly monotone, like the low roar of savage beasts in a desolate land. Dreary as is, to English

taste, this bare north-east coast, we who love it presume to hold it dearer than the wild scenery of Highland hills, or even the richer loveliness of Deeside. And when the plough has turned the yellow fields to brown, the even, never-ending furrows lying across the steep undulating land seem to wear, for some minds, the suggestiveness of a sketch in pen-and-ink compared with a finished picture. We have been musing long enough under the gloaming yews; let us come out into the September sunshine, and commune with the flowers. The borders are full of colour. In one there is blue monkshood (*Aconitum autumnale*) full six feet high, like pillars of blue fire, alternate with golden-rod (Solidago), sun-flushed Bocconia, and feathery spikes of *Aclœa serpentaria*. Hosts of humble-bees throng the monkshood, all round and up to the top, hurrying as though their very lives depended on the honey-getting of the hour. They are every one of them the same: black, with dull yellow bands and grey tails. The sheaves of golden-rod, alternate with the monkshood, are entirely left to hordes of flies, not a bee amongst them. As yet Tritoma, which later on will make so grand a show, have no sign

of flower amid their dense growth of long narrow leaves. There are ranks of snapdragon, gay with all imaginable tints, and hedges of cornflower, blue, pink, and white and purple, *Hyacinthus candicans* and gladioli in varied groups, and single dahlias in luxuriantly flowered rows. Alas! that I have to chronicle the fact! long lines also of yellow calceolaria and china aster! Calceolaria does so thoroughly well in Scotland that too much use, perhaps, is made of it. It is certainly the most uninteresting of "bedding out" flowers. I fear dislike would be a word hardly strong enough for my personal feeling about calceolarias. The colour is too raw (unless when they are brown, and that is dismal). Every flower of them comes precisely the same. They never seem to me to be as God's own children; like other flowers. And yet a single plant of calceolaria growing here and there, alone amid other things, might be tolerated. Blue lobelia—though "a bedder"—is delightful, and so are scarlet and variegated geranium. The endless lovely flowers that are grown from seed in patches or broad bands are surely preferable to the comparatively few plants made to serve the dull routine of "bedding out." Gazenia,

with black velvet, gem-studded circlet rayed round with orange, and dwarf larkspur, and clarkia, and candytuft (though that may run in too common a strain). *Phacelia campanulata*, pale primrose-tinted *Platystemon californicus*, *Limnasia Douglasii*, &c.; with a thousand more. Clarkia, both pink and white, is an old delightful favourite. Here is a large patch of it in pure white between the apple-trees along one of the grass walks. The effect of the whole is light and fresh and varied. One has to look well into the whole mass to understand how each flower is in form a true Maltese Cross, floriated. Now and again the cross comes out plain, and unfloriated; as if Nature in her haste had neglected to finish off each one the same. It is to be understood that the garden where we wander is of very large extent, and although the most exquisite order prevails throughout the greater portion of it, some breadths of border have to be left much as they were nearly half a century ago—the older plants of that date being allowed to spread and flourish as they will, while but few new ones have been added in later days. Herbaceous plants increasing into large clumps are far handsomer than if they had been

divided. The double *Geranium pratense*, grown thus, made a fine mass earlier in the year. *Lysimachia verticellata* is in its prime, but evidently impatient of the dryness of the soil. And for the same cause it may be that iris is never seen here, "with her glorious rainbow clothed." There is a rosy mist of phlox; while with Japanese anemones, both white and pink, the bloom is finer than is usually seen farther south, and the colouring more vivid. Autumn crocus, white and lilac, single and double, are present everywhere in little knots. How they first come one never seems to know; we did not see them coming; but one day, on a sudden, we chance to look down, and they are there in all their beauty. From the farther end of a green vista some sudden fire of scarlet arrests the eye. It is a plant of scarlet Tropæolum (*Tropæolum speciosum*) hiding in clouds of glory, the blackness of an Irish yew. In Scotch gardens this thing is absolutely a garden weed. In the south we may break our hearts over coaxing it to grow, yet grow and thrive it will not. If it would but consent to stay with us in an English home—for the sake of its perfect colour it should climb and clamber wheresoever the spirit moved it

to disport itself. It should mingle with my wild briony, and illuminate each tree,

> "And catch the neighbouring shrub
> With clasping tendrils and infest his branch,
> Else unadorned, with many a gay festoon,
> And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well
> The strength they borrow with the grace they lend."[1]

After the flame of the flower has retired, all over the plant appear little round lapis-lazuli beads, two or three sitting together, in tiny open calyx-cups. These remain more or less for our delight until the day when frost first strikes down the parent plant. I fear, however, that *Tropæolum speciosum* may do more harm when it smothers a shrub in its close embrace than ever did our white briony. Almost everything that does well in England grows even better in Scotland. Where the soil and position of the garden are favourable, they will attain to greater stature with more than equal luxuriance, while yet their growth is less rank, and, in some indescribable way, of a more obedient character. Could there but be room found for all one wishes in the garden, how many things that grow so well

[1] Cowper, "The Sweet-Pea."

in Aberdeenshire should have a trial! There is *Actæa rubra* amongst others,—now entirely crimsoned over with clustered berries, and only a foot and a half in height; or St. John's wort in three varieties, one of them bearing bunches of large yellow flowers; wanting, however, the characteristic stamens which give such charm to the low-growing species, here just out in bloom. Then there is the yellow-flowering tree-potentilla; and, to name no others, a honeysuckle, which appears to be quite new, and I know of it in one garden only; the pyramidal flower-spike, deliciously fragrant, and the leaves glaucous. These all bloom here late in the year, although their period would doubtless be earlier in the south. Pansies always do better in Scotland, for they greatly enjoy the coolness of the soil. In amongst some rhododendrons one of the common violas has carried out an extraordinary freak. It appears to have imagined the plan of making one believe a small rhododendron-bush to have broken out all over into little lilac heartsease! I stopped to examine the cause of this strange effect, and found that a seedling viola at its root had climbed up through and through the stems and leaves, bestowing thus a second bloom, as it were,

of a very opposite kind. There is no second bloom on any roses except the Devoniensis and Gloire de Dijon, though Madame Plantier, always bounteous, gave us the last of her *boules de neige* only a few days back.

About the western end of the high terrace clings ever the grace of a tender memory. At that end is the ivy-covered ruin (a tall round tower), and part of the shell of the old house. Through the empty windows fair faces in past days have looked out on the yew-garden and the autumn fields beyond. In the tower walls loop-holes and narrow window-slits could tell a sterner tale. Round the corners in August, waved like a white banner, long flowering shoots of syringa. On the smooth turf beneath the windows stands an ancient sun-dial. It is rudely hewn, rather than carved, in coarse granite, and represents four children's heads turned in opposite directions, the three gnomons standing out from the base. In the lapse of years lichen has gilded over the hair and shoulders. High up on the ruined house-wall, half hidden in the ivy, is seen a small finely-carved stone bearing a shield with a coat of arms and scroll. It was placed here by John Kennedy, a former possessor of the

place; on the scroll appears his name and the name of "Isobel Cheyne his Ladye." Of his family motto, "*Avise la fin*," the first word only can be clearly made out. The whole is crumbling away fast by stress of years and weather. They were pious folk these Kennedys, and they gave a silver chalice to the kirk, inscribed "A coup for the Lord's teabell" (table). Nevertheless, Kennedy and his men had afterwards a deadly fight with their neighbour, Forbes, and he had to fly the country. All this happened long after Abbot Chrystall's day, after the Church lands had been confiscated. The touch of interest above referred to, however, belongs to later times, now remembered only by one or two. It was fifty years ago, in the golden mists and splendour of mid-autumn, that a new lady of the castle came, and for the first time saw the garden terrace of the long-wished, long-waited-for inheritance. She at once set her fancy on that quiet spot near the old tower, and planned a little garden there. Here were planted the flowers she loved the best, and here were brought plants from her own former home in England—lilies of the valley, yellow brier-rose and honeysuckle, and the old-fashioned tea-plant climber; crimson moss-roses, and

delicate white geranium dashed with lilac. The little border of gentian and tiny white campanula remains, and the flowers still push up through the weeds, and open in their season. The vases on the wall are there, and the stone seat is in its place. But she never rested there, and she never saw the bloom on her favourite flowers—for early in the summer the eyes of the gentle châtelaine were already closed in sleep. Over the garden door, underneath her name, might be the words "*Lux erepta de cœlo luceat.*" . . . The west border along the terrace, like some others, has not been disturbed for many a year. Here acanthus makes an immense growth. It does not spread, but has grown into a bush. Stray blossoms, of right belonging to June; bright red and yellow stars; are shining here and there upon Schyzostilis and yellow king's-spear. *Lilium tigrinum* seems unwilling to let summer go. Double yellow Potentilla (*P. Phœbus*) will outlast *Eryngium amethystinum*—the only plant, I believe, that exists, with stalks painted ultramarine. *Lythrum superbum roseum* is flowering off his latest, long, glowing plumes. It is but a river-side wild flower (Loosestrife); yet since cultivation has improved the colour and the growth of it, it

deserves a first place in the autumn garden. Flowers of the easiest culture have a way of disappearing from a garden sometimes, without any apparent cause. Seven years ago *Agrostemma flos Jovis* gave infinite delight, with its contrast of white leaves and deep crimson bloom. To-day there is not one in all the borders. Another loss is the little Dianthus, *Napoleon III.*, a creature of marvellous colour, and of florescence so profuse, that care must be taken to get cuttings in good time lest it flower itself to death. Plantain lilies (Funkia) have withered away, though their great club-shaped foliage will stay with us another month or so. *Scolymus grandiflorus*, the great yellow thistle by the steps leading to the garden, has turned brown and looks forlorn. Tansy is beginning to be gay with flattened umbels like golden salvers. In old gardening books, "Gold of Pleasure" is sometimes named. Could it be this late-blooming tansy? There is also *Tanasetum balsameta* (Cost 'Mary), a precious second bloom of *Helvetia pubescens rosea*, and the pervading gaiety of *Coreopsis lanceolata*. A few weeks longer, and flower and leaf will, one by one, have ceased from the garden borders, and the grace of the fashion of them must perish

and be forgot. Yet has not each one, as it faded and died away, seemed in its way to whisper "I shall arise"? And so, after the winter and hard weather, if we wait and have long patience, we shall see the flowers come again with joy.

My Friend and I, in the Garden:

To Vervaine

My Friend and I

LETTER I

H——, *March* 12, 1899.

DEAR VERVAINE,—The March winds are out: I hear them roll in the distant trees, and there's a weird sound in the window. You know the effect the wind has on me, mentally and physically. Last night sleep fled, scared by the continual hard tapping of magnolia leaves against the glass, the rattling of doors, and fitful gusts of wind which swept round the house. Sometimes, when at night the wind howls down the chimney—I like it; the mighty rushing does but lull one into sounder slumber. I am thinking of a good many things tonight; and out of the waste of years crops up unbidden a curious little memory of something heard in earliest childhood—the strange experience of a very old clergyman and his young curate who were passing

the night in an ancient manor-house somewhere far in the country. At dead of night the two priests were awoke by a terrible blast of wind which raged against the house, shaking the walls and the windows as if it would shatter them to pieces. In the midst of the uproar they hurriedly left their beds and went all over the house. They passed through every room and passage upstairs and downstairs, expecting at every moment the windows to be blown in. But nothing happened. All the time there was no wind; the night was calm and clear, and the stars were shining. On the mind of the child who, unnoticed, had listened to the tale there remains to this day an impression that the unearthly storm had been raised by the power of the Evil One.

"The sorry wind" is singing now. A little of the sorry wind goes a long way; and even in my new garden-room, with the wide delightful window of leaded panes—made to catch the full south pouring in great floods of light—I do not care to listen. The sorry wind in a solitary evening, singing, chanting, reciting all the time, is most melancholy. What it says I am never sure of; but I know that in the music of the sorry wind is never heard

aught but a strain of hopeless sorrow. It sings for ever a song of "old, unhappy, far-off things," as from some forgotten past, or of some remote, immeasurable future. If pathos be, as has been said, "the sense of loss and longing, mingled with melancholy," then the sorry wind is surely pathos itself. It is the saddest sound in the world to listen to. Yet even as I write it changes and swells into a roar as of many waters, and one's thoughts turn to overwhelming waves and storm-tossed ships at sea. The darkness covers it, but I know how our great Wellingtonia in the garden rocks and bends before the wind! Oh, if it might but break it and lay it even with the ground! A forlorn hope; for that tree is built like the Eddystone Lighthouse, with a girth of over thirteen feet at two feet from the ground, tapering up ninety feet or more. No natural force can undo a structure planned with art so consummate. Young giants such as these were never meant for a small lawn of half an acre.

March winds and psychic phenomena, however, have nothing to do with what is in my mind to tell you. I am required to write something about "June Roses." How can one write of "Roses laden with

the breath of June," while June is yet such a great way off? And is it the same with you as it is with me, I wonder—that each new month we forget the flowers that went before—nor with distinctness fore-think or see imprinted in the mind those which are to come? The rose of yesterday is as though it had never been, and to-morrow's rose "into the world will blow" and surprise us like a new creation. How can one imagine the beauty of the rose while still the eye is not satisfied with seeing the glory of purple and yellow crocus? A good providence for us indeed is the year's procession in the garden; in no other manner could we entirely enjoy each flower as it appears. In the sweet perfection of each new-comer we forget those others who have gone before: each flower in its turn is loveliest of all; and we are off with the old love and on with the new almost ere yet the old one is well out of the way. And so it will be for ever—let us hope in the garden only!

For two weeks past the pure white of the snowdrops under the limes has been a continual refreshment and delight. Sometimes when the gardener passes my window carrying a basketful to send away, you would think it a basket heaped with snow.

To Vervaine

The autumn leaves are always left to drift and gather in heaps in the lime avenue to make protection for our beloved snowdrops, who lie spread like a white sheet underneath the trees, outside the old wall that bounds the garden on the western side. Last evening at sun-down I opened the little door in the wall to look out at them, illumined as they would be by the light of a sea-green sky, glowing with such mysterious splendour from behind the dark line of leafless trees. In the garden, when I returned and had shut the door—seen through an arch in the great, solid yew hedge were quiet breadths of lawn glimmering grey and still between clipt box and yews. Little points of shut-up crocus standing upright in the grass, the stone sun-dial and dark plots of heather, troubled not the unity of the whole soft twilight sketch of perfect peace. The garden is in a state of impatience: things in green up-springing everywhere, and already low musical mutterings are heard among the trees. In the morning sunshine the lawn, which evening made so dim, will sparkle with a thousand open cups of crocus, purple and yellow. Most people, bees and sparrows included, as a matter of taste seem to prefer the yellow. Early bees dive busily in the

yellow chalices, while sparrows and white fantails, with fatuous inconsequence, tear them into ribbons. You and I, Vervaine, know which we like best: the purple with anthers of red gold. That contrast of purple with green grass is dreamily delicious. Then there is the white crocus. These are the ice-cold flowerets travellers see peering from under crusts of frozen snow as it melts along the path on some Alpine mountain pass. A pale lilac sort also, like striped muslin, is just opening into bloom. All over the long green we call "Nut Close" there are signs of a coming blaze of crocus, gold mingling with flames of purple. So closely are these flowers set that almost one might say with Andrew Marvell's mower: "Not one blade of grass you spy'd, but had a flower on either side." In Iris Court every almond-tree is ringed about with a ring of silver and gold or of turquoise scilla.

The garden-men will soon have to be busily threading crocus borders with black thread twined round little sticks to circumvent the sparrows. This single fine thread is defence enough, for they are far too clever not to suspect treachery of some kind from us. It is amusing to watch these poor little well-hated beings doing

"their level best" to swallow Indian corn which we scatter for the white pigeons. The little robbers may be clever, but they don't yet know how to hold down the grain with one foot in the way that comes so naturally to a titmouse, so the difficulty of hammering out the soft edible part is almost insurmountable. I am confident, however, that with time sparrows will succeed in learning everything they mean to learn. A colour contrast that would gladden your heart made for me the surprise of my early walk before breakfast this morning: *Iris reticulata* growing out of a tuft of primrose. The fine deep violet-purple of the iris, with the full yellow of the primrose, was one of those chance arrangements of Nature that delight us by their unexpectedness. The two grew together among the rough stones of the rockery, just below the spot where earlier had bloomed a patch of *Iris Danfordiana.* It is a plant of but a few inches high, and we watched with pride the first unfolding of its brilliant daffodil-coloured flowers. Brief was our pride: the attention of every bird in the place was immediately attracted, and after a single morning's work only a few yellow rags remained of its short-lived loveliness. The commoner sorts of iris increase so rapidly as to be-

come a burden to the garden. It is foolish tenderness, I know, yet it goes to my heart to destroy the overplus, as in other gardens. To divide and throw away half a beautiful plant in winter, just because of the very luxuriance that had in summer rejoiced our eyes! One autumn day I saw, a little way off, a primrose cloud settled down by the roadside on the outskirts of a fir coppice. Nearer, it became a heap of garden refuse overgrown with tall ænothera, or evening primrose, blooming in solitary magnificence in the wild country road.

The little snake's-head iris will soon appear, to puzzle those who seek to find the flower, so well concealed within the mass of green; flower and leaf being all one shade of almost dusky green. The black velvet tips of the small head, that is, of the flower's falls, will alone betray its presence. Have you observed how curiously snaky all through this iris is? the slender, upward-darting stalk, the thin, vicious-looking flower and forked green tongue? I cannot recall whether you are of the number of them who turn cold at the mere semblance of a serpent? Likely enough it is so, since for true friendship friends have to be diverse; and I confess that the serpent race is to me entirely

pleasant! Shall I send you a box full of snake's-head by post, and trust your true word to tell me by return if you faint on opening it? And did you ever hear the story of "The Gliding Girl"? If not, remind me.

From snakes to angels is but a step; and in order you may learn how nobody's garden is, or can be, all Eden, know that the shower of angels' tears (in the Latin, *Triandria alba*) that impearled the rockery last spring is stayed—and to-day they are not; the sole sign of former existence, a few narrow spears of green piercing the dull, dry earth. I suppose these fragile little things make thus mute protest against a something unpleasant to them, either in soil or situation or both; or, it may be, the kind of personal dislike to ourselves in which I fear some plants indulge! A new sensation in this flattest of all gardens is a low mound in the midst of a little lawn of daffodils. The great Douglas fir came down, and the mound our nursing care had from time to time raised gradually about the roots remained, picturesquely streaming with the small-leaved wild English ivy. The idea at once suggested itself of planting the mound with all manner of delightful things — with Scotch roses and *Rosa*

rugosa and *Berberis Darwinii* and iris, and a sprinkling of autumn crocus in between, and pale blue Delphinium at the back. It is done, and it is ideal!

And now, a word in your ear. It was no tempestuous wind that caused that Douglas fir to fall. . . . It was done by order, and a green length of seventy-five feet one day lay low along the ground. No one else must know, or my character would be gone! The great elms stood near in line—but they will never tell. Nor do I fear the birds of the air, that they should carry the tale.

The poor tree had had his day: it was time that he should go. I saw no special beauty of growth, as the branches bore upwards instead of feathering down. And the tiny lawn which he shared with two ancient apple-trees had grown to be too narrow for all. So the Douglasii was doomed; and none remember nor regret save perchance the gardener who nurtured it, or the birds who nested there and sang "from the pulpit of his tender boughs." Now that the tree is down and his rings can be inspected, we know how neat and clear is their cyclometry, and of how "a subtle chain of countless rings the next unto the farthest brings" the

record of thirty-five years, from seed to maturity.

Besides the two old Blenheim orange apple-trees, a conifer or two remain upon the lawn — Nordmaniana, darkly green, who each year loses his leader, and Excelsa, with long cones hanging from long fringed and tasselled branches. Excelsa grows so crookedly that in aspect it is more shrub than tree. The rather lanky lowest limbs of it lie along the moss, entangled within a mass of withered pine needles. (Why do we always say *needles?* When an old man tidying up his fir-bordered lawn at Bournemouth said "he had been picking up *pins* all the morning!" the expression sounded quaint.) How few moderate-sized gardens have space for conifers! We dot them about the lawns with no forecasting of their future growth, and for many years we may take pleasure in increasing size and height. I used to take half the credit to myself as the Douglasii rose year after year—ten, twenty, even thirty feet: tall and straight and beautifully green from head to foot. On April evenings a thrush would take possession and make the tree vocal, while from his full heart he sang to the sunset sky. Sometimes on clear nights we saw the

first star sparkling between the black upper boughs, then watched it round the edges of our green pyramid, and launch out into the open dark. Later on came unspoken misgivings, when we were conscious of undue expansion, and filling up of the lawn. The hoar old apple-trees, singular amongst all the others for this, that their branches never bear the fatal death-bloom, are dear to us when autumn suns gild the fruit and encarnadine their vine-wreathed stems; in summer when shadows of their leaves variegate the turf with cool pommele-grey, and in winter beloved for hoary lichen and hanging mistletoe. These were being crowded out by the younger fir-tree. At last, on a sudden as it were, we understood how the yews across the lawn were blocked and the silver birch and pink thorn, with many another favourite, were lost to sight, and how the whole garden wanted breathing room! Thus it came about that Destiny wound the web of fate around our Douglas fir.—Yours ever,

E.

LETTER II

H——, *March* 28, 1899.

DEAR VERVAINE,—"The Vervaine and the Dill, that hindereth witches of their will." Don't you sometimes like a motto? And how well we two should carry out the old distich if only I could fancy myself "Dill" to your Vervaine! The description of Dill in old books is not taking. "The leaves be all to-jagged." . . . "The floures be yeallow." . . . "When they are vanished there cometh the seed . . . and the roote dieth yeerely." Vervaine is much more pleasant. It is "Sacra herba," "Juno's teares," "Holy herbe." And Pliny tells that "guests will be the merrier if the dining-room be sprinkled with water in which vervaine hath been steeped." Yet it is certain that "the Devell did reveale it as a secret and divine medicine against the plague." So, after all, Vervaine is not to be trifled with!

Will you be glad if I tell you that the rose has come? The joy of the rose has returned to me. It is not of course the

advent of her glorious self, but there has happened in the garden a little, strange illusion. The illusion was but momentary, yet it made a lovely moment, and made one image vividly June roses in their beauty. At dusk last evening the snow fell in deep silence; it fell all night, and this morning our garden and the fields around were one wide glittering plain. The whole world was white until the sun arose in strength. Then the snow gradually vanished away from grass and tree and laurel roof, till only within the shade there lay long drifts of white. But the evergreen rosemarys, and mezereons, and some too forward rose-trees still held the snow in knots and knops all up and down their leafy branchlets. These knops of snow had the effect of flowers; and under my very eyes, for one instant, Summer stept into the garden! The garden suddenly awoke and burst into bloom. Ten thousand untimely snow-white roses laughed and shone with joy in the cold March afternoon. . . . Have you seen the green rose? you would love it, if you knew it well. Ours—with a plant of that rare delight, white lavender—was sent to me from Tabley Hall, whose Lady devotes herself to all old-fashioned garden flowers.

It is very curious, yet far too fine a thing to rank only as a curiosity. I have grown to think the green rose beautiful, in its own weird way. Yet is there something of the sorceress in it; and in June when bees are humming round it, the name "Sidonia" seems to tremble on the air! So I call her Sidonia. When the green rose is generously treated in a good south border it will grow to be a large, well-furnished shrub, fresh green from June to January, not so much with leaf as flower. Sidonia's roses are round and full, in colouring deep green, the outmost petals flushed with red. You must go close up and look it in the face, or you will not know the bush is really flowering. Then, what seemed at first all leafage is transformed into a mass of roses green. As for perfume, strange to say, I know not whether it has scent or no. The old China or monthly rose, beloved for its sweet pink clusters and delicious smell, is as a heavenly half-sister to Sidonia. It has almost disappeared, and there is sometimes difficulty in getting it at the nurseries. Since all the world runs after the French tea-roses, the China rose is nowhere. These French roses are certainly as useful as they are beautiful, for

you may have them blooming profusely throughout the summer up to the end of November. I first saw them in a Kentish garden a year ago last June, and thought never had I beheld such lovely rose colours. Apricot and peach and golden, and that indescribable "Rosa color d'angiolo," set off by the crimson-black of one named "Dr. Grille." You may be sure some scores were at once ordered from Lyons for the rose garden. M. Bernaix, the "Rosiériste," sent us fine strong plants, for which we prepared the honour of new beds. And now, against that time when you shall once more create a garden of your own, these are the names of some sorts which do the best in our climate—Princesse Sargan, Marie Van Houtte, Anna Olivier, Madame Hoste, Madame Cochet, Madame Blanche Cochet, Marquise de Vigers, Papa Gontaut; also black Dr. Grille. It is true that French roses possess not the soul-moving fragrance of our own old English damask, or hybrid perpetuals, nor the attar of roses of *La France* or *Lady Folkestone*. Their scent is so delicate that it requires a sigh to inhale it: yet such as it is, it does greatly please. I have also peopled for you your garden of the future with cuttings struck

from our Ayrshire roses. We have planted them all over the garden and orchard, setting them diligently to climb the apple, pear, cherry, and double peach trees. As soon as they are settled in they grow away fast, and cover themselves thick with bloom.

Long ago there might have been some twenty different garden roses. To-day the varieties named in the rose-growers' catalogues are endless. In "Henrie Lite, Esquier's," English translation of a "New Herbal or Historie of Plants," 1586, the number described is just ten, including "the Eglentine, which is like to the wild rose plant, full of sharpe hooks or crooked prickles and cruel shoots, springs, and rough branches." Mr. Henrie Lite's pages are often very entertaining. He tells also, how "the ancients dreamed that white roses became red, although at first they were all white, and became red afterwards with the bloud of the goddess Venus who loved the younker Adonis better than the warrior Mars, and for very anger and despite for the killing of her faire friend Adonis, she threw herself into a herbor of prickly roses. And the roses all bedewed and sprinckled—they became red, the which colour they do yet keepe (more

or less)." This ancient myth of the white rose turned to red by red blood spilt on it survives in other forms. Little now, however, remains of the picturesque rainbow-colouring of the old heathen poetry: of such imagery as the story of poor rose-torn Venus: or the nectar that dyed white roses red on this lower earth, when the bowl was upset by Cupid's wings as he led a dance at the Olympian banquet. It is a vein of graver poetry that runs through sacred legends of roses in the first Christian centuries. Was it not from you I had a couplet about the Crown of Thorns? (which was supposed to be of rose-briers):

> Men saw the thorns on Jesus' brow,
> But angels saw the roses.

A hundred years ago the Lancastrian tradition still lived, of Towton battlefield, where, they said, wild roses of a peculiar kind sprang up; and the more the field was ploughed, the more abundantly they flourished. But in truth it was only corn-roses, or scarlet field-poppies: which is disappointing! Tales of the mystic rose of the modern day seem to have something of a gruesome flavour; at least it is so with one which I found last week in a

cutting from some far-back number of *The San Francisco Call.* The cutting was gummed on a fly-leaf at the end of a little old forgotten book of "poems on various subjects," sent me by an unknown friend. The authoress, Henrietta Harris, is as unremembered as, poor thing, she deserves to be. (I feel sure she wrote out all the rhymes first, and afterwards filled in.) Her patron was the Countess of Essex of that date, 1805, and the sole interest of the book is the newspaper cutting at the end, "The Romantic Story of a Florida Flower," which is thus described: In the western part of Jeaffreson County, Florida, grows and blossoms into magnificent beauty a rose found only in a small area of country, five miles round, and that will not flourish in any other latitude. The leaves are very light green and glossy; the petals curve inwards, and are of the colour of bright arterial blood. The odour, pungent and fascinating, is yet repellent, and the marvel of this strange rose is that the dew which drops from it is of a faint pinkish cast. It is called "The Grand Rose," and the story of its origin is heartrending. Tragedies such as this were however common enough in the New World of those days, 1834.

There is a young married couple with their one little child living in a farm near the Ancelia River; and soon after the birth of the child the Seminole Indians start on the warpath. And then follows the usual sequence of horror. The man, riding out one evening a few miles from home, is killed and flung into the river. The woman, escaping with her little one in her arms into the woods, is soon tracked and overtaken, and both of them murdered, while the glare of the burning cabin lights up the scene. Then, two days after, a party of hunters find the bodies and bury them. And the red earth of their grave in time bore the mysterious bleeding rose which was discovered a few years later in full vigour by one of the same party of hunters, on the very spot where mother and baby had met their death. The account given in that old newspaper is well told; especially the part where the wife, in her lonely night-watch, listens in vain for the sound of her husband's horse returning; and when "the yellow hound gets restless, and whines as he snuffs the air"—and then the sudden savage yell that breaks the silence. . . . I can easily imagine an unbelieving smile as you read! Unlike you, I, on the contrary, believe always. And the more

incredible, the firmer my faith that nothing is too strange to be true. Please consider this, as a case in point! I have just happened to interrupt a man off the road in the act of gathering my precious daffodils. He was hard at work in the wet grass, calmly making up a big bunch. . . . And, strange to say, I refrained from anger! The man did not run off. He stood up and laughed. Tried to argue that it was all right. I said, "Do you know you are stealing?" He said it was "stealing, and not stealing." I said, "Do you know I planted every one?" He said, "I'm so poor; and I'm only getting them for Lady H——. She wanted me to get her daffodils, so I come here for them. And Lady H. is very respectable; and you've so many! and it's such a pity I'm so poor!" It was rather pathetic, and I simply *couldn't* get angry. The daffodils were past their prime, so he was presented with one more, a quite fresh one, and a small silver threepenny, and the gate was shut on him and his flowers with an injunction not to forget to tell Lady H. he had stolen the daffodils, and never to do it again.—I am, yours ever,

E.

LETTER III

H——, *April* 7, 1899.

I FEEL sure, dear Vervaine, that you will agree with me about hyacinths. Both you and I love the favourites of former years, the old, spare, fragrant hyacinths of many colours; and we agree in our almost loathing for the stiff, fat, overgrown creature of the shows, which is almost the only hyacinth to be found now. Far, indeed, has the garden hyacinth been forced to wander from her lovely blue wild woodland type with the down-bent head! We always try to get the thinnest sorts now to be had; but none now excel in classic beauty certain very aged pink and white and blue, which have come up year by year in the rose-garden borders for the past seven-and-twenty years. Ant. Roozen sends us every spring our supply. This season they are put in with no formal order, under the south wall, near to the green-rose bush and the moss-rose, and all amongst great sumptuous leaves of autumn crocus and slender stalks of pale star-like

daffodils. Most even of these chosen hyacinth-beauties in pink, grey, purple, and white are too fat; but in a mass this is hardly remarked, and they send forth a most sweet smell as we pass by. At midday, when the April sun is hot, this south border is delicious; and there at that magical moment meet together the bees and the beetles and newly-awakened butterflies, whose small history repeats itself in the garden with each returning spring-tide.

With the dawn of spring they are there. Exactly the same species appear, so personally like their predecessors, they might be taken for the same individuals; and they all do exactly the same things as in preceding Aprils they have done. The first sulphur butterfly is there, splendidly spreading his wings. Solitary bees in crowds (!) hover up and down before the old red bricks, prying into every hole and cranny, between the branches of red and white *Pyrus japonica*. They never seem to find a hole to their mind. Little black humble-bees try to be busy with the hyacinth honey. But a tiresome fly, made just the same as the bee, only tawny instead of black, shadows them wherever they go with a provoking shrill buzz.

What may be the fly's ultimate motive I cannot guess. He is not satisfied till he has worried away the bee, and his aspect is decidedly malignant. (Mr. Grant Allen well knew all about him!) Amidst of these divers interests the hive-bees gravely go about their own business, and take no heed. The garden would lose half its joy without its living things to share and enjoy it with us. Moles have made mountains on the tennis-lawn; and provoking as are their ways when they throw out our pot-plants, or choice bulbs, &c., I own a liking for them, as one of the few species of wild quadrupeds still left alive in England. But it is rather uncanny suddenly to become aware that, a scarlet geranium, for instance, is swaying and toppling over in a flower-bed just before your eyes without apparent cause! Once in my life I actually beheld a tiny pink hand, put out and instantly withdrawn, after waving in signal, from the top of a mole-hill. What I was meant to understand I never knew.

Those two fine cuttings we had of the Macartney rose, sent me from Hertfordshire, are dead. It is certainly the most difficult of roses. Years ago one of great size covered part of the rose-garden wall,

but as it never flowered I cut it down. Ever since the memory of it has remained one of my regrets. The foliage is uncommon and beautiful, but it seems useless trying to grow it. Do you mind, how prettily in his "Third Booke of the History of Plants," loyal old John Gerarde brings in the exhaustless subject of the rose? He says: "The plant of roses, though it be a shrub full of prickles, yet it had been more convenient to have placed it with the most glorious floures of the world than to insert the same here among base and thornie shrubs: for the rose doth deserve the chiefest and most principal place among all floures whatsoever; being not only esteemed for his beautie, vertues, and his fragrant smell, but also because it is the honour and ornament of our English Scepter." He puts into a chapter between garden and brier roses: "divers sorts . . . indifferent whether to make them of the wild rose or the tame, seeing we have made them denizens of our gardens." (What would Gerarde say to our tame tea-roses?) Of "wilde roses" he says: "We have them all except the brier in our London gardens, which we think unworthy of the place." And again: "It (the wild rose) groweth likewise in a pasture as you

go from a village called Knightsbridge hard by London, into Fulham, a village thereby." Can you fancy those dear green pastures of long ago, where the hard, noisy streets are now? The great luxuriant untrimmed hedges, full of birds and whitewood and honeysuckle and hazel, and hedgerow timber which was the glory of England—and graced with wild garlands of the rose. Only 250 years ago; and then, the Brompton Road as it is!

The promise to write a paper on June Roses is not forgotten; nevertheless it is not to be fulfilled. I can only think just now of the lines by Mr. Andrew Lang, which, of course, you know, but which I copy out here for the pleasure of transcribing them. They give so rich a sense of the soul of June's fairest triumph as would make *my* commoner words poor indeed. So, they shall remain unsaid.—
Yours, evermore, E. V. B.

"This morning I vowed I would bring thee my roses,
They were bound with the lace that my bosom encloses;
But the breast-knots were broken, the roses together
Flitted forth on the wings of the wind and the weather,

To Vervaine

And they floated afar on the foam of the sea,
And the waves were aflame as when sunset uncloses;
But my raiment is drenched in the dew of the roses,
Thou shalt know, Love, how fragrant a memory can be!"[1]

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[1] By permission of the author, from his volume of poems entitled "Ban and Arrière Ban."

Andrew Lang

A Palace of Old Memories:

Hampton Court in Bygone Years

HAMPTON COURT

A People's Palace

FOR a few whose familiar knowledge of it dates back from a far-past childhood, the very sound of the name of Hampton Court bears a sense of old-world quiet. The noise of fountains falling in rippling rhythm, or the echo of the sentry's measured tread upon the flags, returns—and there is the smell of limes in blossom, and a feeling of old days gone by, and of all that made up for us the unforgotten past.

My grandmother,[1] who died at the age of ninety-two, inhabited apartments at the very top of the palace, and with her and her life there, the whole place is to me, associated. Down her long stone stair of nigh a hundred steps she went, and up she climbed again, once a day at least, till a short time before her death in 1852. I knew her for some twenty years,

[1] Lady Albinia Cumberland, daughter of George, third Earl of Buckinghamshire.

and to me she was always very old. People said she was a pretty old lady, with her round dimpled face, and the arch look in her grey eyes. Youth, however, sees not the beauty of age, and vividly as yesterday, I can still recall the bewildering disappointment when she gave me on a birthday, her gift of a lock of snow-white hair in a gold locket. The baby heart had coveted instead an auburn curl from the front that adorned her grandmother's brow! It was then that I heard with childish wonder the story of how her hair had turned grey in a single night, after receiving the letter which contained the news of her husband's death.[1] He had sailed to the West Indies to take up his appointment as governor of Tobago, and died of yellow fever, just as the long voyage ended and his ship had steered into port. In those days, my grandmother, as one of Queen Charlotte's ladies, was attached to the court of George III. In youth she had been very lovely, and this, her portrait by Romney testified. Probably, scarce any one is now living who remembers her figure as she used to be seen walking in Hampton Court Gardens.

[1] The eldest son of Richard Cumberland, the dramatist.

A little old woman, rather bent, yet with slow and stately gait. Her train of soft black mode silk she held up at the back as she walked. A white kerchief, and a black lace veil arranged over her close round cap, completed the picturesque toilette. Bonnet she never wore, excepting on Sundays for service in the chapel. At chapel, Lady A. (she was always "Lady A." to her family and friends) sat upstairs in the Royal Closet, or enclosed gallery, then the exclusive right of present or former members of the household. Here she made a point of beguiling the hour of service with the peculiar chronic long-drawn cough, in which she indulged to the exasperation of the whole congregation. Vainly they threatened to bring it before the Board of Green Cloth—the "Star Chamber" of Hampton Court;—Lady A.'s cough was indomitable. Little do I remember now of her real character. I know that she loved flowers, and kept myrtles on a wire stand; that she wrote beautiful prayers in the fly-leaves of her prayer-books; that she "quizzed" her friends (smart remarks were styled "quizzing" in her day), and that they did not always see the joke. I remember that in hot weather she would cool her carpets

with a fine-rosed garden watering-pot; that she had a passion for open windows, for silver plate, and also for beautiful books,—and for cutting out of them valuable prints, which she gummed into a portfolio. I remember also the rose-pink rouge, which, though daintily applied every afternoon on one cheek, was so often forgotten on the other; and the quaint handwriting—hard to decipher, and well sanded over with glittering gold sand. I remember, also, her affectionate devotion to the Royal Family whom she served so long. I dearly loved my grandmother. By whomsoever else she might be feared, to the children she never was severe, and she never said she missed from her store the *pâtes de guimauve* and jujubes, which we could not resist, though we sometimes tried.

In these days of imitated art, it is no small privilege to be able to see at the back of the mind's eye, distinct and clear as a Dutch painting, rooms like those at the top of the long stairs. Rooms furnished in the days before intuitive good taste had vanished. The drawing-room especially shines out to memory, distinct and clear in its minutest details. From the dark mahogany Sheraton or Chippendale tables,

the Indian cabinets, bearing on their tops blue delft bowls filled with rose-leaves; the bookcases and whatnots carrying white Japanese crabs and vases, besides the old novels ranged in their endless volumes; and the China mandarin decently robed in faded velvet, reclining under a card-table near the door—to the high, square, small-paned windows, and green moreen window-cushions, there is not a jarring note to be descried in the harmonious whole. Through those wide open windows, ever thrown wide except in dead of winter, came the continuous, ceaseless fall of the fountain below in the gardens: most dreamily delicious sound! Sometimes the fountain would go mad, and dance wildly up and down. Even in those intervals, the very splash of it was musical. In through the windows would steal warm wafts of sweetness on summer afternoons from the blossoming lime avenues. Leaning out, we watched the blue-backed swallows in mid-air under the windows, coursing up and down; or in late autumn, clustering about the grey stone mouldings. And then the view! From the palace centre, in lengthening, dark procession, radiated the straight lines of heavy-headed yews. Beyond the garden's water-boundary, the long canal

and the avenues of Home Park made a lesson in beautiful perspective. On the left, a green vista led on a mile away, closed by the mottled old square tower of Kingston Church. Down to the edge of the canal at sundown, the whole herd of fallow deer would troop with velvet step to drink, then plunge in and swim across to the other side. At dusk we watched for the white owl, who rarely failed on silent wing to cross from the left bank to the right. The distant end of the canal fifty years ago seemed to be a wood; now there is but a hard line of bald white buildings. The beauty of the ancient yew-trees (there were hollies, too), once the garden's pride, has deteriorated since then. It must be over a quarter of a century ago that they underwent a barbarous persecution. With an idea of improving their appearance, the authorities one day took the trees in hand. Some of them had grown to be great ivy tods rather than yews, so smothered were they in ivy. So the ivy was hacked and stripped off, only to find the gaunt straggling heads that remained, too old and too far gone to bush out again. Then the trunks were literally flayed; all the natural roughness smoothed away; and then, when laid bare and naked, it is whispered that

they were scrubbed with soap and water! Poor yews! could such cruelty ever be forgot, even if advised by the first gardeners of the day? In the long ago, that is imaged deep in the magic mirror of memory, the Hampton Court yews were in the zenith of their full perfection of size and shape. Few in number, however, were the flowers in the plots surrounding them which bordered the close-shaven lawns. There were yellow crocuses in March, in double rank along the edges of the turf. Along the Broad Walk, as one goes towards the Flower-pot Gate, China roses and heliotrope and dark crimson fuchsias, struggling with masses of blue convolvulus and mignonette, together made sweet confusion in the border. Here and there rose a tall dahlia, stiffly overlooking all. No great variety; but on the other hand there was then no carpet bedding! The reign of that form of floral tyranny did not till long after begin to vex the poet's soul. Virginian stock, lovely in the blending of its variegated hues—there must have been besides. For, as a little child, I once surprised a tiny flower of it on a window-sill at the palace top. A bird may have somehow carried up the seed, and it had lodged in a cranny between the stones.

The window was intersected by the great triangular stone pediment, which shut off half the daylight, lending an almost prison gloom to the chamber within. The gloom, I remember, was heightened by the ornaments on the high chimney-piece: a row of dull, greyish-coloured, queer-shaped cups, which were made at the time of the famine to hold a little jam and look if possible like pastry, and so to save the flour.

It was Sunday, and during church-time the child was left alone in the room. It was dull and dark, so she climbed up to the window, and discovered with ineffable delight the radiant little lilac quatrefoil just outside! Afterwards, the growing girl found again her childhood's "prison flower" in "Picciola's" well-loved pages. And now, long years after, regularly as April days come round, a little packet of Virginian stock seed is brought in by the gardener and laid on her writing-table; and the old woman goes out into the garden, and with her own hands sows the seed for remembrance, where best the sun and showers may nurture it. . . . Amongst the flowers of the gardens, we loved best of all the "Star of Bethlehem." The plants grew wild about the roots of the

limes near the Pavilion Walk, and season after season they appeared, and never missed. Starlike is that lovely flower; and yet, how wan and watery shine its grey-green petals! June is the month when it is due, when the harbinger of joy whose name it bears has long since paled in Eastern skies. The idea of something sacred seems not uncommon in names of plants of that race. *Ornithogalum arabicum* (pure white with centre of shining black) is in Spanish "Oyoz de Christos," or "The eye of Christ."

On the narrower canal, whose clear waters girdle all that portion of the gardens lying nearest to Home Park (it used not to be called "*The*" Home Park), neither geese nor ducks were known; and the little duck-houses of these days were not in existence then. A pair of swans ruled in solitary state, or anon forgot their dignity by standing on their heads and grubbing among the weeds after the manner of their kind. A black swan was at one time permitted to bear them company. In the brown shade cast by trees upon the water, often might be dimly seen a dark length of lazy pike—moveless as a piece of dead stick. Reeds grew sparely where the rich turf met the water on the other

side, next the park rails. It was reserved for modern taste a few years ago to dig this strip of grass, and make of it a kitchen-garden and a store-place for manure. There, in the days before such profanation was thought of, near this cool, quiet spot, by the water, the palace ladies, on hot summer afternoons, would bring their books and work-baskets. Even on a Saturday, the van-loads of *cockneys*—an appellation then in vogue for the London people—would scarcely care to out-wend in that direction. The swans, with ruffling plumage, swam up and down; and gossip told how one day the black swan, in passing by, stretched his long neck and snatched her silver thimble from a lady sitting on the green. She, equal to the occasion, seized the black thief by the throat, and ere the thimble had time to slip down the length of it, forced him to disgorge. Where the narrower canal, and the triple line of its bordering lime-trees end westerly, at an angle following the river's course, a broad green terrace walk begins. The Pavilion Walk bore a character of gentle mystery, which drew one's steps that way as with a spell. All along the grass at intervals there stood great solemn yews. Such of them as still remain are full of

dark grandeur, but time and neglect have broken up the long line, and their number is diminished.

On a crescent-shaped lawn beside the Water Gallery, and rounding to the Green Terrace, is an old carved stone pedestal. The statue or vase, in common with all those that at one time decorated the gardens, has long been carried away to another place, or else destroyed. This pedestal, engrailed with lichened eld, was an enchanted stone—or so they said. If at evening one knelt down and laid the ear against it, the fairies talking might be heard. Many an evening have we, as children, lagged behind while our elders walked on, and stolen over the grass to crouch beside the cold grey stone. Yet, not for all our listening, did we ever hear one low whisper from a fairy's lips! It is true that in the thick fog of a November afternoon, a chain of brown beads tossed over the high river wall has been known to fall at the feet of one walking alone there, and although received as a mystic gift, to change at once into a string of common horse-chestnuts! And it is true as history itself, that no person has ever succeeded in the task of walking straight along that smooth turf between the willow-fringed Thames

and the yew trees' line, with their eyes shut. It was thus, without question, in my grandmother's time; there is hardly leisure nowadays for such-like follies. Infinitely remote and far away did the tangled wilderness of the Pavilion Garden, at the far end, in those days seem. In "the Pavilion" lived an old Mrs. Moore. She was seldom seen abroad, nor did I ever see the walls of her house, nor ever penetrated more than once beyond the wicket into the garden. That once was enough! What appeared to be a red and white speckled calf rushed out and beset us from the moment we entered and the little gate closed behind us. Turn whichever way we would, the creature bounced out upon us from within dense dark thickets of sweetbriar and syringa. It did not pursue, but it harassed, like a malevolent elf, till at last we fled before it terrified. The wildest, ferniest region of the park skirted one side of the Pavilion Walk. How lonesome and how lovely it was! On late September evenings, after the hot, sultry day was done, the sun-browned bents gave out a dewy perfume so subtle that the senses scarcely can recall it. Stepping through the dry thin grass, the fallow deer would cry to one another in the drouthy silence,

calling one another's Christian names; names quite easy to distinguish. It was "Jack! Tom! Harry!" all over the place! "The time is long past and the scene is afar," yet even now the sound, as I think of it, is in my ear.

An ancient hollow oak, standing as for ages it had stood, knee-deep in green bracken, was the friend of our youth, and frequent goal in long summer ramblings. The hollow was good for climbing up inside; and what unspoken joy to crawl out through the open rent, and, sitting on a giant branch, survey the world at ease! An old red brick building near by was the keeper's house. It is since pulled down, and no vestige of it remains. Nearly opposite the site of this old barn-like house, in the iron rails dividing the park from the Pavilion Walk, are set a pair of lofty wrought-iron gates. Others, smaller and not made to open, were formerly arranged at intervals along the railings. One of them, whose centre ornament is a harp, I saw again for the first time after many years in South Kensington Museum. Sad, it seemed, to meet thus, in the dulness and dust of London, the old friend so well remembered under the open sky, with wild grasses wrapt about its feet! Of the

magnificent Great Gates it is curious that personally I retain no recollection from the olden days—they seemed, indeed, to me, a new feature on revisiting the place in 1893. The brain that designed and the hands that made them alike are dust, but these grand specimens of iron-work need never know the touch of time. Change and decay are not for such as these, intended, as most probably they were,—exclusively for royal use; yet they, or rather a portion at one side, are now open all day for the public to pass in and out of Home Park. Just in front of them, across the Pavilion Walk, a new right-of-way with steps up the wall, has for the last nine years given easy access from the barge-walk on the river-side. Is it old-fashionedness, or maybe some yet more unworthy sentiment, that leads one to resent this throwing open wide to all the world? The effect seems to have half-spoilt, in some sort even to have effaced, the old special grace and dignity. There is so little of repose in a public thoroughfare; and everybody, from a tramp to a tourist, may now pass without hindrance into Home Park, or through the gardens into the no longer sentry-guarded palace. None may hope to enjoy here, as in the days that are no

more, the deep refreshment of solitude—of silence that scarce heeds the murmuring flow of the swift-running river, or music of gathering rooks in shadowy trees beyond. None shall any longer seek the "sacred quiet" of this secluded spot—

> "Far estranged from maddening riot
> And the busy haunts of men,"

musing, it may be, at times within themselves—

> "When the ills of fortune grieve us,
> When her short-lived favours flee;
> When the hollow-hearted leave us,
> Oh, how sweet to fly to thee!"

Without any doubt there is a depressing sense of "People's Palace" about the Hampton Court of 1896. It is well that the people of a great nation should have ample resource for holiday playgrounds provided, and it was the gracious act of our Queen to grant these at Hampton Court to a public in those days comparatively small. But may not the sacrifice of beauty and fitness and time-honoured associations be sometimes carried just a trifle too far? Is it not rather a dream than a happy reality—the belief that this going through beautiful gardens, picture-

galleries, or noble buildings, will in itself work out an education or enlarge and elevate the minds of the many? Must it not be that the mind of a multitude set upon their day's outing needs long cultivation and preparedness to receive such teaching? And does a Board-school provide it? But questionings like these I am afraid are characteristic of the didactic dulness we know only too well in some of the light literature of the day! Let us, however, go straight back to the sweet, unfading memories of Hampton Court as it used to be. That deer-haunted west region of Home Park, from which we have wandered, was very wild and unfrequented. Save for perhaps now and again a solitary countryman making his way along the path to the keeper's lodge, rarely did one see a human face there. The shaggy, wide-horned Highland cattle—picturesque and fierce of aspect—seldom penetrated there. In this direction, somewhere near the cratches or cribs used to hold fodder for the deer in winter, lay a large square pond, reflecting a little group of cork trees, the *Alcor noque* of Spain, growing on its bank. It was a dreary piece of water, and on one day only do I remember its grey monotony disturbed. We were sitting in

the cork-tree grove, when on a sudden, all over the whole surface of the pond, were seen to rise up innumerable little fountains. They seemed to be about a foot or so in height, and they played merrily for several minutes, then sank down and disappeared as suddenly as they came, and never were they beheld again! At that dim, distant date, no explanation seems to have been either sought or given. We—in our childish wisdom!—believed the strange sight had to do in some way with the big carp supposed to lie concealed in the mud at the bottom. Very dejected and poor-looking were the weather-worn cork trees of that forlorn grove. Their branches, thin and scanty, spread so high above the cattle line, that in my ignorance I imagined them to be a species of fir tree. Yet the uneven, rugged bark of them was a thing to arrest attention. It was true, typical cork. (Does any one now remember about Lord Somebody's butler, who travelling with his master in Spain appeared indifferent to all the glories of Granada and Seville, but when he saw the big cork trees of Madrid his butler's soul at once was fired with enthusiasm?) There are not many I believe in these days who care to plant them in England; they are out of fashion. In the

seventeenth century, and earlier, perhaps, they seem to have been not uncommon in gardens near London. With lovers of beautiful trees, the cork (*Quercus suber*) must always be a favourite. The fine warm colour of its stem contrasts so well with the rich, ilex-oak-like foliage; and where soil and climate suit it, the tree is so well-built and handsome. There exists in the British Museum a letter written by the parish priest of a village in Buckinghamshire, which tells how, after dining with George Evelyn at "his Seate" near Burnham, he "went out in the garden to see the Cork Tree." That might be over two hundred years ago. The garden still exists, but the tree is no longer there. Many a cause besides natural decay may well make for the destruction of such a tree, however fine; and already it was said to be a hundred and fifty years old. It was somewhere not far from the dreary pond and the cork grove that, as well as I can remember, the spot was pointed out where William III.'s horse slipped and gave him the fall which afterwards proved fatal. Four trees (their species I forget), undergrown and crooked, marked the place. The historical interest of an event so unimportant can scarcely still survive, and it

is more than likely the exact spot may no longer be kept in mind. Can Time's oblivion ever cover thus the real tragedies of that era?

Of long-dead kings and their life at Hampton Court, many are the tales that might be told: the place is storied with them. Two kings only, bear ever so slightly a part in these impressions of fifty years ago. There is first, a vague swift vision of William IV. and Queen Adelaide in a pony phaeton and pair of greys driving rapidly up the Broad Walk, towards the Flower-pot Gate. (Kings and Queens alone might do this.) And then comes another vision of a gay crowd assembled at the foot of the grand painted stairs—called the King's staircase—to see Louis Philippe and Queen Amélie pass by through the cloisters. I see still, the expression of the French king's countenance, beaming with the happiest good nature, and his brown hair curling up high on the top of his head.

These were but royal visits of a day, and never were repeated.

In Home Park rabbits were unknown; but on summer evenings the "merry brown hares came leaping" on all sides. Sometimes in March a young leveret might

be discovered, snugly niched between the projecting roots of a lime tree. Or a hare would start from its form in the long grass, almost as one's foot touched it. Close by the slate-coloured doors of the Hampton Wick entrance—woodwork used to be painted mostly either slate or white — in a sheltered corner grew — I had almost said resided—the remnants of a pair of elms of enormous size, and most venerable age. Of either tree, the shell alone remained alive; yet, of such great vitality were these two hollow ancients possessed, that each had managed to branch out and bourgeon from the upper rim of bark, so that in the season of leaves they made a fair show of green. I never heard the life-history of these two elms. It is certain, however, that even so long as fifty years ago their great age was held in honour, for they were protected by a stout post and rail fence round each. Around the two oblong ponds in the neighbourhood of these living skeletons flourished a wild growth of willow and alder, where reed sparrows chirped and chatted through the day, and the water's edge was fringed with reeds and blue forget-me-not. Kingfishers flashed across, all gloriously azure-green, secure

in those happy times from the edicts of a cruel fashion, and from the hands of the relentless milliner. Gallinules and a few less frequent water-fowl visited these pools. A heron fished in them unharmed; and swans made there their resting-place, and there they yearly launched their grey-coat fleet upon the quiet waters. The park is in this part bounded by a high wall, on the other side of which extend a long range of paddocks. The Queen's state horses, the cream-coloured Hanoverians, were bred there, and from a point of view on slightly rising ground, one might sometimes see a pale young colt or two at grass. Along a little plain between two avenues lay the path leading to the palace. It led along the ridge of a wide fosse or trench, made in William and Mary's reign for the military manœuvres held in the park. Along this plain in sultry August weather, at every step, hosts of churring, tawny, grass-hoppers skipped aside, among the yellowing grasses and tiny starveling hair-bells. Overshadowed by the trees near the long canal, the way opened formerly into the gardens. The right of private keys for this gate was limited to ladies of the palace. Here, the narrow, half-moon canal was crossed by a white wooden

bridge. Under it and on either side the bridge, upon the still surface, lay great water-lily leaves, crowned in their season with white lilies. In their season, too, bronze-green musk beetles, with long, curving antennæ, ran and slid upon the wet rounded leaves. Down through clear interspaces, between lily-stalks and wavering lengths of emerald weeds, one might watch the fish dart in and out with glancing gleam of gold, or bask on quivering fins, poised within some sunbeam lost in darker depths below. Leaning in fancy over the wooden balustrade, a dream floats back of other years, steeped in the faëry suns of long ago. The calm of some old autumn hour returns, and for one short moment, To-day is not. . . . The great east front of Hampton Court lies within its broad, black shadow, wrapped in the silence of mid-noon. High up, in the very topmost rooms, well I know my grandmother sits near the open window. She is reading, or making up a cap. She always made her own caps! The time for relieving guard approaches, and a distant clanking in the cloisters soon will mingle with the fountains' ceaseless fall. The one old gentleman who has leave to fish in the Long Canal stands on the margin holding his

rod over the water, and waits in patience. And now I think I hear voices coming across the park: happy voices, long since silent. They are coming nearer. The key turns in the lock and the hinges creak as the heavy gate swings open slowly. Under the trees a little drift of dry brown leaves stir with faint rustle. Suddenly the bell of the palace clock peals One—its silvery tones passing away with the awakened breeze into the far-off blue. . . . And so the dream breaks. The old bridge is gone; gone, too, are "the old familiar faces," and the voices of other days; and stronger still for that shadow of a dream is marked the dividing-line betwixt past and present. The modern bridge is lower down, in a position convenient for the public, and for the park-gate, which occupies now a somewhat gloomy corner, and is left unlocked all day.

Tradition holds that nothing lost in Home Park is ever again found. Yet could an X ray of rarer powers be discovered, revealing things hidden in the ground, it might be that a child's small treasure might come to light somewhere about here. Just one hundred and one years ago an old maiden lady, a family friend of the famous Dr. Bentley, died.

She bequeathed to a descendant of his, "Lady A.'s" little daughter of seven, her whole hoard of precious things. There were jewelled *étuis*, enamelled watches set with diamonds, and many a thing such as folks in these days go wild over; and there were besides a number of beautiful little finger-rings, all strung on a bit of pack-thread. One day the lawyer in charge of the bequest journeyed down from London to Hampton Court to deliver it over. The little girl was by ill chance allowed to keep possession of the rings herself, and one by one soon nearly the whole of them disappeared in the long grass where the children played, and were never seen any more.

The ghost of Sir Christopher Wren, if ever he revisits scenes that were ennobled by his architecture, must not seldom have to turn away grieved and disappointed. It is easy to imagine how he would shroud his face to shut out the eyesore of surrounding erections, as in London—or as here and elsewhere the desecration of some of his most choice interiors. The pillared Garden Cloister of Hampton Court was no doubt designed as a fitting entrance or exit for the Court to pass through, to and from the gardens. And thus, un-

altered, it remained up to so late as the 'sixties, or perhaps much later. Then, when the palace grew to be more and more "A People's Palace," this spacious, stately vestibule became a receptacle for the storing of garden chairs, piled up to the very ceiling almost. Shop counters were placed there, and photographs sold. Through and through every summer's day swarm the loud-voiced crowds, to whom, if indeed perchance they know it, the name of Wren is as nought. The sense of quiet and good taste which belonged to the days of old, when everything was more or less in keeping as it were, is forgotten. The inner semicircular alcove leading from the Fountain Court to the Garden Cloister is built with arched recesses, or niches in the wall, which might have been intended for statues. There were no statues, but in one recess sat a poor old woman who sold fruit. Two big market baskets on the pavement at her knee were heaped with fruits according to their season. In June and July long narrow strawberry pottles, the same as painted in Sir Joshua's "Strawberry Girl." Later came punnets of greengages and plums and apricots. Especially fresh to memory are the old fruit-woman's plums. They were always

a kind of red, unripe colour, and about as hard as the stone plum with which Miss Edgeworth makes her parents worry poor Rosamond of "The Purple Jar." None the less, however, were they to us supreme as objects of desire. The old woman entrenched behind her baskets ceased one summer, and her image faded. Out of mind also, it may be, is now the far distant time when the water in the Fountain Court and also in the gardens uprose in one high *jet d'eau*. The strong, firm stream simply sprang into the air and fell with a certain indescribable rippling plash, which comes back forever at will to the ear of those who knew it. The full flow of the fountain then had not been frittered into flattened prettiness, which seems so ill to accord with Fuseli's grave and fast-decaying medallions of the Labours of Hercules, frescoed in grisaille round the cloistered square.[1] Equally out of keeping with the grand lines of the garden is the same low flattened form of the present

[1] Since naming "Fuseli" as having frescoed the grey medallions, I have seen a copy of Mr. Law's Guide to Hampton Court, where Laguerre is named as the artist. I have no doubt of this being correct, but I prefer to leave as it is the name of Fuseli, the error being one that is bound up with my own old impressions of the Fountain Court.

day, carried out in the central fountain there. Far-famed for its crystal purity was the drinking water of Hampton Court. It was conveyed in pipes from the hill of Coombe Wood, a distance of perhaps three miles. Fevered sufferers in the neighbourhood, lying sick and parched with thirst, have been known to pine for a draught of this pure water. Leaving the Fountain Court one might wander under dark cloisters, and thread the windings of dim passages, or come upon narrow doorways and glimpses unawares of little paved courts or crowded-up old bits of garden—ins and outs where sometimes it was hard to find the way. . . . Of less ancient date, in cool and gracious contrast to the so-called Dark Cloisters, are ranged the white pillars of the White Colonnade. Doors lead from it into apartments whose charm was their access to the Private Gardens, now in these days almost the loveliest and most delightful part within all the palace limits. The Bower Walk and the terraces and green alleys are still full of quiet beauty ; although for the inmates, it may be, their charm scarcely equals what it was when there was an entrance fee of one shilling for strangers. And here it may be noted that in former days the palace

had no ghost-haunted corners; visitants from another world were then unheard of. They might have been there, but no one spoke of them. Perhaps people believed them less, perhaps they were more afraid. Many things now are talked about or printed which then were scarcely breathed. The sole apparition ever known to cause a shudder or a shriek was "Cardinal Wolsey" when, followed by his wife, he noiselessly entered a room from nowhere! A sudden shadow darkening the carpet gave the signal for immediate flight from the room, whoever might be there at the moment. The shadow was a huge black spider, named by common consent after Hampton Court's renowned cardinal. The creature's size was abnormal, his stretch of leg prodigious. And his wife was certain to come after him, as though to enhance the horror!

Within the oldest of the old brick walls there is a garden court, about which nothing remarkable is known excepting the story of two acacia trees which once grew therein. Both were planted on the same day as very young saplings by two sisters who lived together for a great many years in the rooms belonging to this plot of garden. The trees (I knew them well) increased in size and flourished

for years with the usual negligent grace of an acacia. Then the elder sister died, and her acacia, immediately after her funeral had gone past it, drooped and withered away. Years passed on, and then at last the other died, having reached a ripe old age. On the very day of her death the surviving tree—the one planted by herself—began to fail, and then it also perished. There existed surely some strange sympathy between the four separate lives, and the same mysterious thread of destiny seems to have bound the old sisters in their age with the pair of trees in the green vigour of their prime. One other tree I remember in its beauty. It was a great catalpa, which, in a sheltered eastern angle of the palace, overhung the garden wall (then guiltless of a public drinking-water tap!) and made the shade beautiful with its thousands of purple-throated blooms. From old age, or from the effects of climate, this fine old tree has long since disappeared, and it would be hard to find another of such grand growth in any place in this country nowadays.

Time wanes, and we must bid farewell to these old beloved precincts. Few, doubtless, are those who will have cared to follow even thus far a lead so trifling, and one

that takes us back half a hundred years! Little use is it to prose any longer of how wide the contrast—how different the then and now; of how the once prevailing atmosphere of repose and quiet is for ever gone. Yet, not even for the joy of beholding Hampton Court once more as it was in the glory of its prime, as it remained, unspoilt and regal, before Bank Holidays began; before the iron horse had outrun the old-fashioned cockney vans from London; even for a pleasure like this, who is there who would have the former years return, with their oppressions and injustice unredressed, their cruelties not wiped out, their unerased blots on humanity still staining the fair page of English life? The old, unhappy things have mercifully vanished; they are gone beyond recall. And if with them much that was beautiful is swept away, we must not lament too deeply, nor deem the price too high, though the obtuseness of modern taste and feeling may often have worked ill, or often ruin, with many a spot dear to the heart of some, as memory itself.

THE END

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